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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EVENT COMMUNICATION IN COTE D'IVOIRE: STRATEGIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

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ABSTRACT

The study fits more broadly in the perspective of the communication of the organizations. The author brings together, in the same context, other paradigms in information and communication sciences, which help to better understand the problematic of event communication in general. The fields of institutional communication, social, political and marketing, are exploited in a general way, but with a particular interest for Ivory Coast. The main reason is that in this country, for ten years, communication based on the creation and staging of events, is in the process of acquiring its acclaim. This communication strategy tends, in fact, to supplant traditional forms of communication and dissemination of information, to constitute the cornerstone of all communication and marketing plans. On the scientific level, the author relies on an eclectic bibliography, in relation to the field of communication sciences (conceptual and theoretical approach). On the other hand, he relies on his own experience and his long practice on the ground, since the 1990s, in the field of event communication, in order to build his argument. Finally, empirically, the work takes into account the data collected from some Ivorian mobile phone companies. This, in light of their sponsorship, patronage or sponsorship activities in the field. The goal is to better expose the dynamic in which the design and implementation of a marketing communication, based on the event creation in the country. The assumption in this reflection is that event communication contributes, more and more, to the success of a marketing campaign aimed at an organization's brand, product or service.

INTRODUCTION

Event communication brings to light any social fact (tradition, rites and customs) that constitutes an event, from the perspective of promoting the event, to a given target, at any time and in any place. Based on this reality, the present reflection aims to determine the real challenges of event communication, in an institutional, social or marketing approach, in the strategy of promoting or positioning a product or service. The study is part of the perspective of the communication of organizations, but it calls, in the same framework, other paradigms in communication sciences, which would help to better understand the issue in debate. In its conceptual dimension, this work is based on a fairly extensive bibliographic sources, which touches on the field of communication. Empirically, the experience and practice of the author's event communication profession is a major asset for the study. Lastly, the case of three Ivorian companies, in the mobile telephony sector, will be examined, particularly in the light of sponsorship, and patronage actions.

Social Functions of Communication: Communication is an action of establishing a relationship with others, transmitting something to someone.

It is the set of means and technics for the diffusion of a message to a more or less vast and heterogeneous audience. It is also, the action for someone, an organization to inform and promote its activity to the target, to maintain its image, by any media process. Communication concerns both the human (interpersonal, group ...) communication as the animal and the plant (intra- or inter-species communication) and the machine (telecommunications, ICT as well as their hybrids: man-animal; men- technologies etc.). Communication goes through all human activities. Gradually, during the twentieth century, a university discipline was created devoted to observing it, analyzing it, building, through research, knowledge about it and training in professions for which it is central. Finally, if communication has existed since, always, as discipline, it is recent. The communication sciences therefore use the skills of many other disciplines. Some, like rhetoric, have existed since Antiquity (Carrilho, 2012), while others, such as media sociology or information theory, have emerged in the 20th century. The sciences of communication are thus an interdiscipline. They articulate concepts, knowledge and methods that come from other disciplines. They combine them in their own way to build their own approaches. Far from wanting to build a general theory of communication, a goal which is of the utopian order, the communication sciences

have been developing, for some forty years, knowledge that allows us to tackle the burning questions of our society. (Ollivier, 2007).

Conceptual Dimension: Functions and Theories of Communication

Tools, concepts and methods, which focus on the study of meaning and its transmission, are used in the sciences of communication. They explain how one can interpret the messages that circulate and how the subjects, who communicate, interpret themselves messages and situation and define the processes and tools that allow to convey or interpret meaning. Finally, communication involves techniques, objects, machines. These techniques and machines offer media whose shape conditions the messages as well as their mode of circulation (Matellart, 1996). From the development of the human and social sciences, each appearance of a new technique and the supports it offers, raises questions, gives rise to theories, promotes discourses and scientific practices, (Baran *et al*, 2006). As an illustration, we discover Claude Shannon and his diagram of transmission of a message; Bühler and its Expressive, Conative and Referential Function; Jakobson and his Humanistic Schema of Communication; Paul Watzlawick and his famous axiom based on the unintentional and uncontrolled permanent broadcast of messages and finally, that of Harold Lasswell "Who says what? To whom? Through which channel? With what effect?". All of these paradigms, on the whole, eloquently summarize and explain the essence and operability of social communication.

In society, whatever the moment of existence, to communicate is part of the expression of life, fulfilling the main functions of information and socialization, motivation, discussion and dialogue, education and cultural promotion, entertainment and integration. In short, it will be remembered that communication is part of human existence. In democratic Athens, there was no talk of communication, because it was at the very heart of society. It was the link conquered by men in their wrenching from the chaos that gave meaning to the system in all its aspects: politics, morality, economy, aesthetics, relation to the cosmos (Sfez, 2010). Communication, to conclude, remains undoubtedly one of the greatest revolutions of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It has upset our lives and society, making possible the open world we live in today, always with a double aspect. First, a cultural dimension, where communication is the "daughter of freedom", and secondly, the technological progress that has led to the conquest of the world, reduces distances, increases exchanges, finally allowing men to be today now interconnected, in just over a century (Wolton, 2012). It is clear that communication is essential for all human activities. It remains the cornerstone of their achievement, especially in politics, economics and marketing, through events designed the effect of making known and "sell" these activities. It is at this level that event communication is convened.

The marketing approach requires that, after completing the identification exercise for individuals or target groups, the manager develops a strategy based on the objectives to be achieved and the target market segments. In this context, the communication strategy is a practical tool for achieving the goals and targeted market segments. It has a duty to play on continuity to generate a real perception of differentiation and to create a brand or a strong brand. It encourages the company

to reflect on the preferred approach taking into account several significant parameters (Helfer *et al*, 2007). With this in mind, a communication strategy, conceived around an event, is seen, in a simplified way, as an exercise to answer the following questions: Who? Whose? How? When? With what effect? For what content? In either case, these objectives must be expressed in quantitative terms in order to facilitate the measurement of the expectation of results. For example, the firm wants to increase its market share by 10%. To do this, it must increase the purchase intention among potential consumers by 50%. Finally, to set a budget of the communication, it is to seek the adequacy of means to the expected results. It is also knowing how to allocate resources to the communication actions that one wishes to implement in the selected media to reach the objectives that one has set in terms of market shares, level of sales or rates of notoriety. Before the launch of a communication action, it is also necessary to set up and budget a system for measuring benefits according to the investments made: awareness, recognition, approval scores, TV message storage tests, fallout from mailings, etc. Finally, establishing a campaign report makes it possible to measure the effectiveness of the advertising campaign in relation to the initial objectives of the communication (Pipard-Thavez, 2008).

History, issues and trajectory of event communication

"Men have been, are, and will be led by events." Voltaire

The history of the event organization goes back to the time of antiquity. Men needed to meet to exchange, to appreciate each other, to party. The development of industrial civilization has given rise to new consumption needs. In order to become better known, impose their products, companies organized their own festive events or in different ways to attract customers. A number of skills were brought together to produce an event, defined as what happens, an important fact that takes place in life. An accident, a case, a theatrical event, a scandal, a tragedy, etc. Events that were previously created did not have the same goals as today. They were designed to promote a product, but only locally. In the 2000s, the world knows the expansion of ICT, with social networks, everyone adheres to it: young people, adults, etc. In fact, the major change in this decade is undoubtedly that of the rapid growth of information and communication technologies. Innovations in digital systems are at the origin of a revolution that radically changes our ways of thinking, behavior, communication, work and decision. This transformation of the market economy is manifested by the planetary networking of individuals (the web), by new forms of communication (e-mails, social networks), by a decentralization in the circulation of ideas and by a reappropriation of the public space by citizens (Rieffel, 2014). This "digital revolution" opens up new opportunities for knowledge creation, education and information dissemination (Lambin *et al*, 2016).

The event communication in question: Event communication, abbreviated as "events", is a communication technique based on the creation of events that are intended as spectacular and out of the ordinary. Event communication can target customers / consumers, the press or employees. The spectacular nature of the event theoretically makes it possible to obtain image effects and possibly press effects. This form of communication must also attract attention and make a mark in the saturated world of traditional communication (AIDA model). Events have conquered and tamed the communication

habits of organizations, to the point of becoming, in a few decades, the driving force of social life. Any grouping of men - be they corporate, business or simply action - can only be made through him (Perkins, 2003). Event communication is the design and staging of an event directly related to a company or a product, in order to generate public interest in the company or the product put forward. This event will be used as support for other means of communication such as Press Relations and Public Relations (Richard-Lanneyrie, 2006). Event communication is an excellent means of "non-media" communication. It is an ingenious step that is part of an approach of the brand of the company or institution by becoming the developer of an aspect of his identity. Finally, the event communication serves as a springboard to bounce back on other actions, to reach new interlocutors. It constitutes, in this, a marketing communication practice. The concept of marketing communication, as a reminder, is to give primacy to the satisfaction of customers' needs and expectations, to put them at the center of the company's processes. In fact, based on the scientific study of consumer desires, marketing enables the company to achieve its profitability objectives and to offer its target market an adapted product or service (Kotler *et al*, 1997).). Event communication is therefore a better asset for marketing, because "if beauty can be useful, the useful must be beautiful", (Perkins, 2003).

Challenges of event communication in marketing

Event planning is considered "communication" of tomorrow. Indeed, whether in the context of launching new products, sales force agreements, road shows. Agencies in this sector offer multiple services. More and more companies are using their services. Expectations are many. Agencies are becoming increasingly involved in defining the communication strategies of companies. ICT, globalization ..., the economy is in turmoil. Thus, the event, without being a panacea, provides additional and complementary solutions for societies in search of benchmarks and cultural identity. Alongside property and consumption, therefore, material goods, aesthetic preferences and cultural practices contribute to the rituals of identifying social life in modern societies (Coulangeon, 2016). Adhere to the company's strategy, reconnect with the trust and the name of its company can be done through event communication. Event communication gives a new vision of the company and removes certain blockages. The staging must be neat. The show is almost theatrical. The event allows one to have a vision of the company with all its human aspect, the balance of power, tensions, aspirations of each. We then transform artificially and ephemeral in a traveling psychoanalysis practice (Perkins, 2003). Reconciling human links within companies is therefore one of the great utilities of event communication, but one must not overlook the other advantages offered by this technique, namely to know a project, a concept or a product and, in the end, make it "sell".

The foundation of an event communication campaign: The spirit of creativity remains the key to the success of an event. The usual media supports are almost saturated. Advertising is necessary, but it is not enough anymore. For a product to sell, it is necessary to go down to the street to put it in contact with the customer. Major events are the shortest and safest ways to directly hit the target. These campaigns are terribly effective: the public seems to be more and more waiting for this kind of event, just to have the scoop on the "trend of the moment". In addition, this type of promotion is much less expensive than

conventional advertising campaigns and the support of the media, fond of these events, ensures the dissemination of information and its appropriation by the target. Lastly, in marketing, event communication remains and remains an effective loyalty tool. In fact, here, the wage argument alone is no longer sufficient to maintain human skills in their treads, companies must innovate in terms of retention of their employees. Loyalty is a marketing strategy designed and implemented to allow the consumer to become loyal and stay, the product or service, and the brand. Indeed, fidelity rhymes with satisfaction (Courvoisier *et al*, 2006). On the basis of this observation, many have grasped the interest of the events, organized around seminars, conventions and other trips, to overcome the danger of the flight of competences. Sport is also a vehicle for passing the usual messages (surpassing oneself, team spirit, competition, etc.). For example, thanks to his presence in magazines and in the daily press, Pierre de Coubertin was able to communicate. He has succeeded in placing the Olympic Games beyond the juxtaposition of world championships in a series of disciplines, articulating chosen events and ceremonies, in the service of a message that, despite its ambiguities and contradictions, continues to arouse the interest of the world (During, 2015).

Sponsorship: the basis of events: From crèche to university, from petanque to football, from theater to rock concerts, museums and other cultural venues, the point is that sponsorship has taken over all areas of life. Phenomenon of communication by the event, touching fields as varied as sport, arts, radio or television, advertising sponsorship, more commonly known as sponsoring, has taken such a boom that we cannot talk about fashion but autonomous institution (Vassort, 2015). As part of a business-public relationship that complements conventional advertising techniques, advertising sponsorship, considered as the first cousin of philanthropy, has been the subject of numerous marketing studies. Also, it occupies a central place in the communication mix of companies. Its considerable growth in recent years has raised it to the rank of major communication techniques. Indeed, since being recognized as a fully-fledged communications technology in the 1980s, sponsorship has shifted from small-scale activity in a limited number of countries to a major global industry.

Second part: the practice of the event in Cote d'ivoire: Event communication agencies have earned their status at the same level as advertising or public relations agencies. In the future, more or less close, they should soon take center stage. This is the example of Côte d'Ivoire where, since the beginning of the 2000s, there has been a proliferation of communication agencies. At least 70 organizations, which work in the areas of Council, Public Relations and Events, are counted. The craze is due to the fact that this sector is promising, in terms of profits and notoriety, for companies in the country. As an illustration, the amount of the service of a communication agency. Event is estimated at 18% of the overall cost of designing and implementing activity, on behalf of a client.

Event in the practice of marketing communication: In the Ivory Coast, sponsorship and cultural sponsorship have become the characteristic of commercial enterprises over the past twenty years, particularly in their commercial or corporate strategies. For example, mobile phone companies such as Orange, MTN, Moov, Koz, GreenN, have exploited this communication technique to publicize their offers, services,

products and brands. Among the themes exploited, music and sports are prominent. These events are designed and planned, with a large budget, to serve as channels for disseminating elements of the values of the organization. At the music level, for example, many concerts are sponsored by commercial companies, radio stations, magazines, brands and products that are widely used by the people. The company Orange CI is committed to the development of cultural and sports activities. The institution has supported the Ivorian Football Federation (IFF) from 2005 to 2016 at national and international competitions. Accompany to that, his support for holding many shows. This company has staged Ivorian football icons, evolving in the European championships. Thus, thousands of T-shirts, gadgets, and even mobile phone recharge cards were made to their effigy. Note that this company has produced a DVD, in which the course of the Ivorian team was traced. Orange CI also financed the production of a musical work, which staged Magic System and some singers of the national team of Côte d'Ivoire. The international reputation of these athletes has even motivated some major French TV channels such as TF1 and Canal Plus to report on the highlights of the "Elephants". All these event communication campaigns have helped to create a certain enthusiasm among the public. On the spot, before the beginning of the competitions, animations, which were furnished by performances of the artists in vogue, were organized in the stadiums or in the public spaces, to cheer up the spectators or those present before their television screens.

MTN was partner of the activities initiated by the National Union of Journalists of Ivory Coast and the House of the Press of Abidjan (MPA). Thus, the organization of various Ebony awards, devoting the best journalists in the country, is supported by MTN. This is also the case of the Miss Ivory Coast Competition (COMICI), a large part of the budget of the organization is supported by the said telephone company. Finally, Koz, before his disappearance communicated on his mark, relying on cultural patronage. To do this, in addition to the RTI's programs that the company co-produced on the first channel, this company was very well illustrated, in 2006, in the cultural promotion, by associating its image with major artistic events such as Podium and Variétoscop. In addition to mobile phone companies, there is the growing presence of many companies in other sectors in the field of event communication. For the managers of these companies, this strategy is a great way to publicize their brands and their associated products. It is also a boon to demonstrate the citizen spirit that embodies their brands.

Conclusion

Cross-cutting and interdisciplinary science, communication embraces all sectors of activity. The great theories, developed to explain the functioning of this discipline, explain his techniques, present his methods and reveal his strategies. All this is essential to achieving the objectives of an organization that are, among other things, to promote a product or service; to increase awareness and brand image, to strengthen the sympathy capital and to encourage purchase. The purpose of the article was to show that several communication techniques can be used to achieve this end. Among these means of communication, event-driven communication, as it has been developed in this article, is an excellent vehicle, to which organizations, whatever the aim pursued, can rely, in order to better convey their message. The reflection has mainly tried to

show that event communication has a bright future ahead of it, in terms of its commercial and marketing issues. Thus, in the light of the case of Côte d'Ivoire, we have seen how the event remains a central element of corporate communication. In this country, many clients consult the communication agencies for the implementation of a global strategy based on an event. The reality is that communication through the event responds to a very specific rigor. It includes two dimensions: one conceptual and creative, the other related to communication engineering. At each context, a particular answer. Indeed, no company, institution, brand ... can exist without expressing itself. To express oneself is to share one's values and messages.

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