Events as an Internal Communication Tool Integrating Corporate Value through Internal Events

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The aim of this research study is to explore how to integrate corporate values effectively through internal events as an internal communication tool. There is quite few evidence about the understanding of the link between internal communication, internal events and employee's perception of corporate values. Thus, the study explores it by conducting six in-depth interviews with managers and employees of a local company in Egypt, which uses internal events for communicating corporate values. Content analysis was used. The findings of this study explored and provided some insights as how events as a communication tool help communicate effectively the firm's values which ultimately reflect on the overall performance and the company's profitability and success. The results of the study revolved around six themes, which are awareness, face-to-face communication, Integration of communication tools, involvement, frequency and feedback. This was identified from the secondary research conducted. The research is useful for companies who want to know more about internal communication applications and practices concerning the added value of using events to communicate effectively corporate value towards employees. Academically, it will add to the body of knowledge about the new trends in the communication mix and more generally within events. This study sets the pace for more future work on this untapped research area.

International Events Management

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1. Introduction

Any company's main goal is to generate Profit and succeed. Profitability of a firm is higher when its employees increase their performance. Employees are motivated to work better when they have a better understanding of corporate values, which ultimately help in creating a nice working environment and building a strong relationship between the brand and the employee (Chernatony et al. 2006).This is why it is important to use proper communication tools to help transmit the values in a clear way to employees. Now shifts in trends of communication are happening through special events (Chernatony et al. 2006).Ferdous (2008) stated that events when used as an internal communication tool would help employee buy in the company's vision and values in a positive way. Daniel et al (2008) highlighted the fact that Organizations came to realize the importance and role of internal communication. Shamma (2012) mentioned that internal marketing has not gained the same attention external marketing did. Thus, there was an interest to investigate and understand the value events bring when companies use as internal communication tool towards their employees and if it facilitates corporate values perception. The following **ResearchQuestions** formed the basis of this study:

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How Can Corporate Values be communicated effectively through Internal Events to Employees?

The research intended to achieve the following **Objectives:**
- To critically review the literature on Internal Events, Internal communication tools and Employees perception of corporate values.
- To explore the usage of internal events as a form of communication tool and its effect on employees perception of corporate values.
- To understand better the added value of integrating corporate values through internal events.
- To draw conclusion on the aspects responsible for ensuring effective communication of corporate values through internal events.

The research study examined the aspects that are responsible for the effectiveness of corporate value perception through internal events only and not other internal communication tools.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Events And Events Marketing

There is a common belief explained by Dakle (2013) towards the concept of events being a large variety of social gatherings. The growth of the special event sector over the last few decades has been phenomenal (Jago 1998). Events contributed to business, which ultimately increase the growth and involvement of corporate in this field (Davidson & Rogers 2006). Corporate events take number of different forms like annual general meetings where companies invite shareholders to announce annual results and sales meetings to motivate and create enthusiasm along team spirit. In addition to recognizing and praising high-performing sales staff. Moreover, for Staff training to keep the skills and knowledge up to date and for product launches. Associations are incubators for any type of events, serving to the countless purposes for which these associations exist (Daniel et al. 2008). Few functions would be the improvement of the relation between employers and employees, the professional development and growth of members; education and trainings and the building of

networks and interaction between people who have the same interests (Daniel et al. 2008).

2.2. Internal CommunicationTowards Employees

Internal Marketing (IM) is an interaction process between the organization and its employees (Ahmed & Rafiq 2003). Today, the way organizations communicate with their internal markets, better known as Internal Communications (IC) which is considered one of the most essential internal marketing considerations (Tansuhaj et al. 1998; Thomson & Hecker 2000). Dolphin (2005) argues that IC is communication between the organization's leaders and one of its key publics: the employees. Young & Post (1993); Foreman (1997); Gilly & Wolfinbarger (1998); Asif & Sergeant (2000) have argued that at the intra-organizational level the communication process has been shown to have a variety of roles including; the creation of a unified corporate identity, encouraging the motivation and commitment of employees by ensuring an understanding of the company's objectives and goals and reducing the potential for misunderstandings and conflict within and between departments.
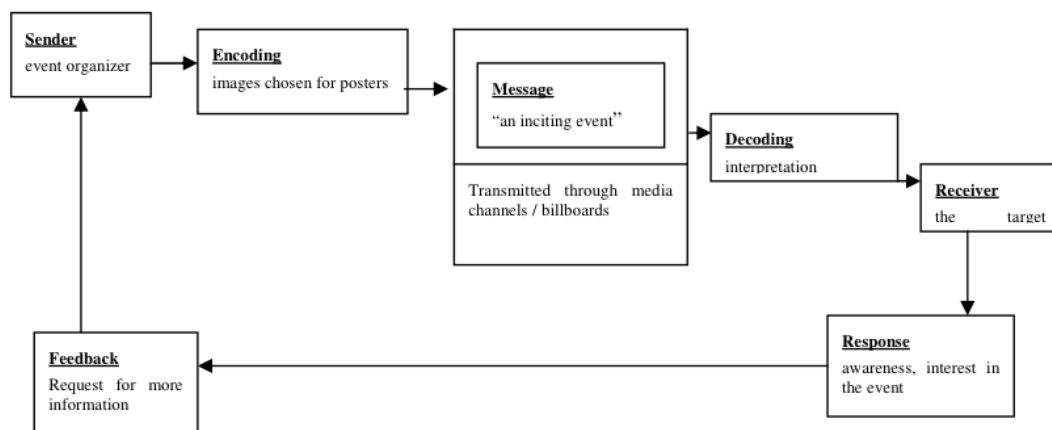
Not all organizations are successful in their efforts to communicate brand values to staff (Van Riel 1995).The same marketing tools used to attract customers can also serve to attract and retain the best employees, who can be thought of as "internal customers" (Berry 1981). Herington et al (2006) mention how firms are able to promote employee satisfaction, trust and commitment which ultimately reflect on the profitability of the company by directing Internal marketing communication towards employees. Employees' satisfaction with internal communication is a key factor in their performance and ultimately organizational success (Erasmus-Kritzinger 2002). According to Maitland (2002) research shows that employees are often unhappy with both the quality and quantity of information they receive. Employees ask for more interaction with management (Roberts 2002). Edwards (2013) argues that few brands face quite big challenges when it comes to communicating with their staff, and work is often needed to modify internal culture. Kale (2006) stated that managers could utilize the communication approach to create a fair work environment, enhance feelings of ownership, belonging and bonding. Given the fact that employees would rather take a participative communication approach, events may serve as the most acceptable and mutually rewarding form of communication (Steyn et al. 2011).

2.3. Events as internal communication tool

The transmitter and the receiver of the message being communicated must be found on a common ground.Bottazzo (2005) argues that organized preparation and execution of a special program, which is largely based on the internal communication, is necessary to achieve the satisfaction of employees. It is transferred from simple informing to one-way informing and then more and more also to two-way communication, from training and education to motivation and eventually to the participation of employees (Bottazzo 2005).Daniel et al (2008) mention that the governmental organizations, non-governmental, profit and nonprofit can use the communication through event to transmit a message to the internal public,

represented by the employees.Ferdous (2008) stated that a competitive advantage is given to firms as a result of creating horizontal integration across a firm's total communication efforts. Such tools could be personal selling, workshops, internal advertising, appropriate incentives and reward.Traditional communications tools widely used by organizers to inform persuade and increase awareness of a certain brand has been losing their efficacy (Hede & Kellett 2011). New tools for communication need to be established. Events can take many forms to explore the new values (Anderson 2001).

The formula below highlights what involves the communication process with the help of events (Daniel et al. 2008)

The Communication System
[from Fill C. Marketing Communications: Contexts, Strategies and Applications; Pearson Education; 2003]

2.3.1. The use of internal events to communicate corporate values

Latham (2006) argued that live marketing events are one of the most effective and essential methods to influence behavior. Ginsburg & Miller (1992) found that for many corporations there was lack of clarity or understanding regarding brand values. In order to effectively communicate values, it is important that employees are not only told but also involved (De Chernatony et al. 2006). This created the need for using events. According to Ahmed & Rafiq (2002) face to face communications to individuals and groups have far greater impact than other communications methods. It is considered the richest form of communication with employees because it has the greatest potential for resolving ambiguity and uncertainty (Daft et al. 1987). This is because face-to-face interaction provides visual and verbal clues that complete our understanding of the information (Mishra et al. 2014). Could be interactive workshops where the main objective of each workshop will be selling the vision and values of the company (Ferdous 2008). The interaction must be extremely significant and unforgettable for the consumer (Caru & Cova 2003).

2.3.2. The added value of communicating corporate value through internal events

When implementing appropriate integrated internal communication program to the company's internal market, many challenges facing organizations would be solved such as high turnover of employees, employee level of satisfaction and commitment (Ferdous 2008). Edwards (2013) argues that Investment in internal events is growing fast, as organizations started acknowledging that fostering staff wellbeing brings loyalty to their brand. De Chernatony et al (2006) mention that brand success is dependent on ensuring that staff understand corporate brand's values clearly and are committed to enacting these values in their interactions with consumers. Ferdous (2008) states that by doing so, employees become 'part-time marketers' (Gummesson 2000). They can influence customer relations, increase customer satisfaction, customer perceived quality and ultimately revenue (Ferdous 2008). Doug Hewett, managing partner at brand consultancy People-Made, believes investment in internal events is on the rise because consumers are focusing more on what is happening inside a business. A promise can no longer be false; brands need to be true to their word - and that starts on the inside when employees are living the brand every day" (Edwards 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample Selection

Given the fact that communication is a process that involves both senders and receivers, it was important to include both views of the special event (Shimp 1993). The study aimed at examining a local company, which uses events as a communication tool to have a better insight by managers and employees who has experienced internal communication through internal events. Purposive sampling has been used since it depends on judgments made which are guided by the purpose of the study (Daymon & Holloway 2011). Judgment sampling according to Sekaran (2003) involves selecting the targeted sample that will provide the best information

required based on their expertise and solid background of knowledge related to the topic sought to answer the research question.

3.2. Data Collection Instrument

Atkinson & Silverman (1997) argue that through interviewing, researchers gain full access to the inner feelings and thoughts, and thus the private self, of their interviewees. Thus, **Semi-structured** interviews were conducted. In-depth face-to-face interviews with managers have been conducted as the senders of the marketing communication and employees as the receivers. The questions were contained in an interview guide with a focus on the issues or topic areas to be covered.

3.3. Data Preparation and Analysis Procedures

The researcher stopped interviewing more employees when the answers began to be similar, repetitive and no additional information was proposed. The interviewees allowed only note taking during the interview. They asked to stay anonymous. Once the interview was done, the interviewees were asked to sign a consent form to ensure that people understood what it meant to participate in this study. Content analysis was used. Stemler (2001) says content analysis the most common notion in qualitative research. Meaning word-frequency count, where the words that are mentioned most often are what present great significance (Stemler 2001). Then data was coded manually after reading thoroughly the interviews several times to identify the main key words repeated that created the themes. Afterwards, thematic analysis was conducted from the transcribed conversations. Direct quotes and paraphrasing of common ideas and words from the interviewees formed the themes.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The answers of interviewees have shown that Pink and Blue is a renowned local company for kids apparel design, manufacture and distribution in Alexandria, Egypt. It is considered very successful despite the economical challenges it faced during the past few years due to the political status Egypt has faced. This is due to their care of their employees. The company cares most about open communication. Internal marketing happens from the first day an employee joins Pink and Blue. The employee gets to learn about the company's values, mission and vision. Internalizing values is seen in the way employees behave. Pink and Blue has five main values, which are Honestly, Respect, Ownership, Leadership and Integrity. Pink and Blue

integrates various tools to promote corporate values effectively such as website, e-mails; posters and mainly they count on company internal events ranging from conferences, seminars, workshops and team building. They use a combination of formal and informal methods to communicate their brand values, formally by Human Resources and communication department and informally by employee interaction, meetings, word of mouth and task forces. Managers believe in the power of communication specifically through events. Human nature likes to bond and gather around people. This is why the company depends on internal events as their main communication tool. Monthly meetings are set to share Success stories, recognize and acknowledge the best performance, talk about the next step towards the direction and most importantly communicate their core values. This gives a sense of belonging and motivates employees, which reflects on the overall performance and success of the company as a whole.

The findings provided main themes by going through the texts and frequencies of words of the interviewees. The main aim was to understand better how corporate values could be effectively communicated through internal events. Six main themes emerged from the analysis with the interviewees. The following provides key findings surrounding each theme.

Awareness

The majority of the interviewees believed that the First step in ensuring that values are communicated effectively is the awareness of how important it is to have an open direct communication system. One of Pink and Blue's values is honesty. Employee 3 said the best thing about the company is the "open communication system where all managers and employees are required to be honest about what they do, say and share". This creates trust between one another and thus affects the effectiveness of employee perception of any message specifically corporate values. The communication manager sees an "organization that is based on transparency and trust" becomes so strong that "all employees become ambassadors". He continues to add that any firm has "to consider the people who are in contact with the everyday customers of theirs".

Face-to-Face Communication

The majority of the interviewees mentioned that a very powerful way to ensure transferring corporate values effectively to employees is having a direct face-to-face communication approach. The communication manager highlighted that face-to-face communication is way better "than emails" and noted,
"We never depend on Word Of Mouth as a communication tool because it is a double edge weapon and it might leave space for rumors to happen. You know Egyptians

and how they like to talk. If we give them the opportunity to share news or transmit a certain message, we might never be able to control the content."

The director believes that nowadays face-to-face events are the most effective way for communication. She noted,
"We use all what we call communication channel analysis, where we assess all the communication methods and tools whether they are effective in delivering the need or not. Events in the highlight of communication but we can not depend on it solely."
The HR manager believes that personal link is key. Similarly employee 1 said it is very crucial nowadays since it is the core of any business "business is people meaning they have to connect together". The director agreed and noted,
"Having an organization in touch where the employees sees the leader and deals with the leader brings unbelievable results. This can be only built by face-to-face connections."

Integration of communication tools

The director, the HR manager, employee 1and 3 believe that the success of communicatingvalues depends on using variety of channels together not to allow any confusion or fragmentation of messages, which might ultimately fail to sell the vision and values of the company to employees. When asked which tool was more effective to communicate with, most of the interviewees said they were complimentary. Employee 2 said,
"*We talk about the values in our meetings, conferences and day-to-day activities. This is why the 200 employees know by hard the 5 values of Pink and Blue."*

The HR manager supported the say and noted,
"I have learned that different things work for different purposes and they compliment one another. I can not pick one tool. You need to understand the amount of information that the people would absorb from an event so we use events for communication but then we compliment it with emails and quarterly reviews and display on other media tools to ensure the message has been delivered effectively and efficiently. "

Frequency

The fourth theme revolved around frequency of communicating corporate values. The majority mentioned how important it is to communicate, share and Integrate corporate value through all kinds of events frequently. Employee 2 said every two weeks, Employee 3 said, "depending on the need" and the rest agreed that is should

be at least once per month. The director mentioned how "Repetition and consistency in delivering the message play a very important role" in communication.

The HR manager noted,
"We do have a specific event done every year for all intakes called the induction. It is held for two days. The purpose of the event is to inform the new employees on the company's mission, vision, values, departments and strategy. Half of the second day is made only to inform them about the corporate values. However, it is not feasible that we do an entire event just to communicate the values."

Involvement

All employees interviewed preferred to participate and be involved rather than told. Employee 1 said she favored to "be engaged" in every part of the organization. This creates "a sense of ownership and belonging" which ultimately reflects on her overall performance. Employee 3 said he "favored workshops and team buildings" more than "seminars and formal meetings" because he "gets to enjoy and live the brand while learning". The director stressed upon the idea of "practicing" values. The HR manager pointed out several internal events that the company organizes to help employees understand values. Those include "team buildings where employees participate in many activities that revolve around the 5 corporate values to help demonstrate those values effectively". The communication manager adds that by engaging employees, comprehension and absorption of values would be higher. This results in "low staff turnover, loyal customers and ongoing profit". When employees were asked which type of events satisfied them the best, all of them said the ones that require participation and they mentioned that attending those events make them "more connected to the organization".

Feedback

Each and every of the interviewees stated the magnitude of having feedback to ensure if corporate values are transmitted effectively through internal events.The communication manager stressed upon the clarity of the message of the sender. He noted,
"If you have 200 people in a single room and you are delivering a specific message or content, everyone will interpret it in his own way"
The HR manager followed by stating that to "overcome misinterpretation" of certain messages, announcements or content, "surveys for feedback from each employee after every event is a must".

The director noted,
"Not everyone has the courage to ask in front of other people what they might think it's a stupid question. This is why we would rather answer any question then leave

space or room for doubts. If you leave a gap in communication, something else fills it. Either imagination or the interpretation of otherswhom we refer to as influencers. So over communication is definitely better than under communication".

The HR manager declared "that every two months", they gather all employees and "ask them for feedback and measure their level of understanding" regarding their tasks, the goals and the values of the company. He was very happy with the results of last yearto see the highest score with 98 percent went for the awareness of the company values.

Linking

Success of effective communication of values depends on how the leaders link the values to their everyday actions. The communication manager noted,

"Communication is at its peak when leaders walk the talk. You can use all communication methods that you can think of but the people will only link it when they see you in action and see you speak about it."

The HR manager supported the communication manager by saying "This is what makes the values memorable"

The director mentioned another important aspect, which is linking "purpose of events to the corporate values". She said that in training, they link the core objectives with the values. For instance she noted,

"When the HR manager is giving recruitment training on interviewing, he refers to the values that the employee must acquire to be able to cope with the organization way of doing things. When giving leadership training, he links it to the values of leadership, respect and ownership."

5. CONCLUSION

The research study aimed to explore how corporate value can be effectively communicated through internal events. The researcher took a local company in Alexandria, Egypt that already uses internal events as their communication tool as a case to examine. The researcher interviewed the Director, HR manager,

communication manager and employees of Pink and Blue. The interviews were analyzed and the results were grouped to six main themes, which are Awareness, Face-to-face communication, Integration of communication tools, Involvement, Frequency and Feedback. The research was able to achieve its objectives by critically reviewing previous studies regarding Internal Events, Internal communication tools and Employees perception of corporate values. Finally, the study was able to draw conclusion on the aspects responsible for ensuring effective communication of corporate values through internal events that will affect employee's level of performance and eventually increased the overall success of the organization. The study is of significant academic importance to students who want to research in this field; academic practitioners who want to further investigate about this (Sigry et al. 2012). **Academically,** this research added to the body of knowledge about the new trends in the communication mix and more generally within events regarding effective perception of corporate values. Moreover, this research added academic contribution by providing evidence that internal events do help in communicating better the corporate values through the case of Pink and Blue, which already uses internal events for communication of values and proved to be very successful. **Practically**, this research provided practical contributions that are beneficial to companies that need an effective way to transmit their values to employees to increase productivity and ultimately the organization's success and profits. This study outcome contributed in recognizing that several key factors or aspects help in effectively communicating corporate values to employees through internal events.

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