

## **The Effects of the Environment on Public Relations and Advertising as Key Elements of Promotion Strategy in the Marketing Efforts**

**Balta Peltekoğlu, F.**

Prof. Dr., Marmara University, Faculty of Communication, Nişantaşı Kampüsü, Küçükçiftlik Sk. Nişantaşı, İstanbul.

**\*Hürmeriç, P.**

Assist. Prof. Dr., Yeditepe University, Faculty of Communication, 26 Ağustos Yerleşimi, Kayışdağı, İstanbul.

\*Corresponding author E-mail: [perguven@yeditepe.edu.tr](mailto:perguven@yeditepe.edu.tr)

**Abstract:** *As the environment became an emerging issue in today's world, businesses became aware of the importance of sustainability and environment and the relationship between the two concepts. Consumers, alongside businesses are becoming more and more aware of the limited resources. As consumers become conscious of the importance of the environment, businesses are forced to act sensitive about the matter. As a result of this, businesses, not only because of the sustainability reasons but also because of the sensitivity about the environment, are in the need of explaining their environmental approach to their stakeholders. In short, their promotional strategies are affected by the sensitivity about the environment. They use eco-friendly concept in their promotion strategies in order to show their sensitivity to their environment.*

*Since both environment and environmental issues gained importance globally, businesses in Turkey have also started to give importance to those concepts and include them into their advertising and public relations activities as a part of the corporation's promotional mix.*

*In this study, businesses' advertising and public relations efforts as a part of their promotional strategy will be evaluated according to their approach to the environment as an element of sustainability.*

**Keywords:** *Marketing, promotion, public relations, advertising, sustainability.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

There is a relationship between promotion strategies and key elements of marketing mix. It can be stated that to create effective promotional strategies, environmental influences should be considered. These strategies are affected by both internal and external conditions. External environments like technological, economic, socio-cultural; political-legal environments, and operating environments such as company resources, company goals and objectives and competition are very important for that strategy (Govoni, et. al, 1986, p.8-9). In short, it can be indicated that there is a close link between the environment and promotional activities. As businesses became aware of the relationship between sustainability and environment, consumers became more and more sensitive about those issues. Non-governmental organizations such as UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) and protocols such as Global Compact and Kyoto, they all had an effect on the environmental sensitivity of corporations' and raising the awareness of the public opinion. Not only because of sustainability reasons, but to explain their environmental sensitivity, businesses started to use the "eco-friendly" concept in their promotional strategies. When they prove that they are genuinely sensitive to the environment, these efforts contribute to their sustainability overall, not just in an economical aspect. "The starting point for the concept of sustainable development was the aim to integrate environmental considerations into economic policy. More profoundly, it was conceived as an attempt to bring environmentalist ideas into the central area of policy, which in the modern world is economics. It was to be ground on which the mainstream was to consider the environmentalist case" (Dresner, 2009, p.69). In Turkey, environment is one of the main themes in businesses' advertising and public relations campaigns. Public relations and advertising efforts of Turkish companies will be discussed in order to gain an insight about their point of views concerning sustainability.

### **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Promotional mix, also called communication mix (Chunawalla, 2010), can be defined as the methods, which businesses use to communicate with their external stakeholders. Govoni et al. (1986) states that there is a close link between promotional strategy and marketing strategy overall. Integrating promotional strategy with the other elements of marketing strategy is crucial for businesses to succeed and compete in the market. Communications is the vital ingredient of marketing and the tools required are collectively referred to communications mix (Dalton & Croft, 2003,p.104). Promotional strategy is defined as "the process of developing and maintaining a communications mix that utilizes company resources to their full

potential in a way that is completely attractive to target markets while contributing to the company's short-run and long-run marketing and organizational goals" (Govoni, et al, 1986, p.12).

According to Govoni et al. (1986), promotion is often called marketing communications. Basically the term is used to explain all those, which marketers communicate to their target market. In general, they underline the fact that the main aims of marketing communication are, to inform, to persuade or to remind. It is argued that consumers do not purchase simply because a company believes that it has designed and manufactured a valuable product or service. Potential consumers must be informed that the product exists, given the reason or reasons why it is better than competing products, and persuaded that they should buy as soon as possible. Karunakaran (2008) also emphasizes that promotion mix is called the marketing communications mix. Being an important function in marketing, communication, constitutes one of the 4Ps of the marketing, promotion, the other three being product, price and place. It carries out the task of informing the customers about the nature and type of the products and services available; their unique features and benefits, uses, prices and places they are available in. It is argued that marketing communications are persuasive in nature, aimed at influencing the consumer behavior in favor of a company's product offerings.

## 2.1. Environmental Context of Promotion

In this part of the study, factors affecting a business' promotion strategies will be discussed based on the figure below.

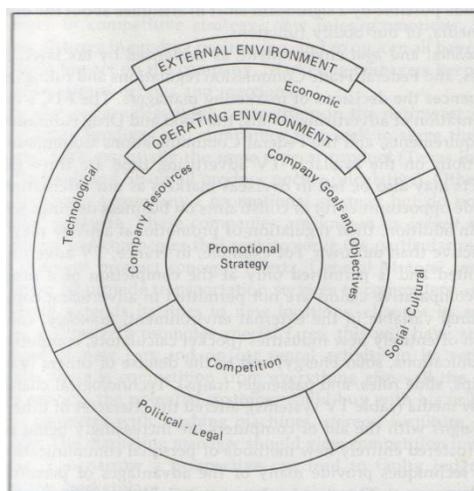


Figure 1. Govoni, N, et. al. (1986, p.9).

A promotional strategy cannot be affected unless the strategy accounts for and is responsive to the environment in which the business will have to operate. Furthermore, the environment is not static; one of its key characteristics is its dynamism (Govoni, 1986).

The environmental context can be viewed on two levels: external and operational.

### 2.1.1. External Environment

Economic factors, the economic environment in which the business operates, has a strong effect on businesses' promotion strategies. Especially during the economical crises, those operations are influenced negatively. In 2001, during the devaluation in Turkey, businesses cut their advertising budgets as an initial step. As the number of advertising decreased, they emphasized more on sales promotion in order to stimulate the market.

The social and cultural environment also plays a vital role in developing and implementing promotional strategy. As Govoni et al. suggested, changes in the fashion during the 1970s reflected a more casual back-to-nature lifestyle emerging during that period. And those changes were noticeable in the businesses' promotion strategies. Today, increasing number of working women has changed the advertisements in an obvious way. Businesses are competing to show their support to working women with their life simplifying products and services. Environmental sensitivity has also reflections in advertising. Correspondingly in businesses' public relations activities, mostly in corporate social responsibility projects, environmental issues are coming forward.

Political and legal regulations also have an important effect in promotion strategies. Laws and environmental rules forced businesses to adjust themselves according to those regulations. They either produced new products such as unleaded gasoline or they restructured their products and services. An important issue regarding political and legal regulations are that there are some types of products or services that are not allowed to use classical (mass media) advertising tools. As this changes from country to country, it will be appropriate to tell that cigarette brands, alcoholic beverages and pharmaceuticals are not allowed to use advertising tools in Turkey. They tend to use different promotional tools, mostly public relations activities and sponsorship in order to communicate with their stakeholders.

Technology is the last factor influencing businesses' promotion strategies (Balta Peltekoğlu, 2010). Adapting technological developments only in the production stage cannot be enough for businesses. They need to show how they value technology by processing this into their promotion strategies as well.

Together with the rapid developments in technology, individuals are highly involved with the personal technological devices nowadays. The more they use technology, easier their life will be. For instance, together with the Internet, smart phones and tablet computers, the concept convergence emerged. Gaining access to information became more and more easier under all conditions. As this convenience is indispensable, it also affected businesses' promotion strategies.

### **2.1.2. Operating Environment**

It is suggested that the operating environment consists of factors that relate directly to the particular product business of the company (Govoni et al. 1986, p.10). Competition is the first factor that has a strong influence on businesses' promotion strategies.

In today's global world, globalization brings out the term, competition. As competition increases, businesses started to give importance to advertising and public relations in order to create awareness and differentiate themselves from the other businesses operating in the market. They tend to use popular concepts in their strategies for being a leader.

Goals and objectives also affect a business' promotion strategies (Balta Peltekoğlu, 2009,p.27). A business can either choose to produce only nationwide or it can aim to enhance its operations throughout the world. According to these objectives, a business must decide on its promotion strategy. Its goals both short and long term have also a strong impact on those strategies. Besides these, the business' resources and limitations in general also affect the overall promotion strategy. A business can only produce according to its own capacity and limitations.

## **3. Examples about companies' public relations and advertisements that represents their concerns about the environment**

This part of the study is based on the Capital Magazine's (a monthly Turkish business and economy magazine) research report named "The Most Popular Turkish Companies 2010".

It can be stated that, in Turkey, there are many examples showing the relationship between the environment and their promotion strategies. Considering communication activities of the top 5 companies in the Capital's survey, the correlation between with environment and promotion strategies is obvious. For example, Koç Holding, Arçelik and Garanti Bank reflect their efforts for raising sensitivity and public awareness about environment to their communication strategies both with their advertisement and public relations activities and with communication established over Turkcell website.

Supporting green energy, Turkcell has announced that it realizes social responsibility projects in the fields of training, sports and employment as well as projects for environmental protection. In the scope of these projects, it draws attention to the importance of environment by stating that it has incorporated core energy savings and alternative energy solutions into its business processes and that it benefits from wind energy in 217 plants. As a result of all of these, Turkcell, one of the largest GSM operators, has shared its activity report for 2010 via its website that covers its social responsibility projects by having benefited from new media.

Koç Holding, another major organization of Turkey, and Koç Group companies that continue their activities under the headings of environmental vision & mission, environmental management, environment-related investments and R&D works, efficiency and eco-friendly products comply with principles determined in this context. In this framework, Koç Holding endeavors to spread environmental awareness not only to consumers but also to all shareholders such as employees, dealers and suppliers. Having accepted to abide by Global Compact that covers 10 universal principles that enterprises must comply with in the field of human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption, Koç Holding undertakes to observe national and, international legal arrangements approved by TBMM (Turkish Grand Assembly), environment-related laws/legislation and other obligations in all of its business processes.

Koç Holding reflects its general policy adopted in relation to environment to its production and incorporates its environmental awareness into its promotion strategies by means of advertisement and public relations applications as well as social responsibility projects that it realizes.

It carried out reforestation works in the scope of public relations with the participation of Koç Holding and Group Companies and realized "Ülkem İçin Ormanları-For my Country, its forests-" campaign with the cooperation of TEMA Foundation, one of the most effective non-governmental organizations of Turkey, in 2008. 63.952 saplings planted in 2007 were increased to 1.194.020 saplings in 2008 as a result of "Ülkem İçin Ormanları" campaign. "Ülkem İçin Projesi (For My Country Project)" defined its purpose as providing trainings to primary school students across the country and has provided environmental trainings about developing environmental awareness and efficient use of resources in 81 provinces in the scope of the project. Around 18.000 'Children Saving the World' with environmental awareness were raised thanks to these trainings provided to children with the cooperation of TEMA Foundation.

In addition to environmental management and R&D works, the fact that Koç Holding carries out activities aiming at children in the scope of "Ülkem İçin" project is the biggest evidence that Koç Holding is aware of the relationship between sustainability and future generations and gives importance to sustainability.

Arçelik that started to operate in the body of Koç Holding in 1955 provides services in the field of durable consumer electronics industry. Arçelik A.Ş. that acts in line with its “Sustainable Development” approach in these times when depleted natural resources threaten life standards of the entire humanity published its 2010 Sustainability Report that covers the priorities of sustainability practices that are addressed at “Human”, “System”, “Product” “Supply” and “Social Development” levels. According to information in this report, the company has designed products that increase life quality of consumers and provide maximum energy and water savings. The company’s authorities have stated that they have introduced products with the highest performance levels in their classes into the market, which are A+++ energy level for refrigerators, A-50% energy level for washing machines and A-30% energy level for dishwashers and ovens.

In addition to eco-friendly product development works in 2010, Arçelik has focused on “energy efficiency in production” and realized new project applications and has been entitled to receive “Gold Certificate” that is given in the scope of energy efficiency in production for the first time in global white ware and consumer electronics industry together with its eight enterprises in Turkey ([http://www.arcelikas.com/sayfa/204/Surdurulebilirlik\\_Raporu](http://www.arcelikas.com/sayfa/204/Surdurulebilirlik_Raporu)).

Arçelik addressed environment issue on its promotion strategies especially by means of advertisement and public relations activities related to its products that are developed and produced for providing energy savings. It proves with these works that it complies with principles adopted by Koç Holding.



**Figure 2.** [http://www.arcelikas.com/UserFiles/file/medya/Arcelik\\_Kurumsal%20sunum\\_Haziran\\_2011.pdf](http://www.arcelikas.com/UserFiles/file/medya/Arcelik_Kurumsal%20sunum_Haziran_2011.pdf)

Garanti Bank, one of the leading banks of Turkey, substantially contributes to sustainable use and protection of natural resources in our country as the main sponsor of World Wildlife Foundation-Turkey for 19 years in line with its motto “Doğa İçin Garanti (Garanti for Nature)”. The aim of this support is to ensure that public gains awareness on environment-related issues and to create a cleaner and livable world. Fire prevention road works have been carried out in Bodrum in order to fight against fire since 2001 in the scope of Fire Protection Projects. Garanti Bank has adopted an eco-friendly approach ranging from the design to printing of 2008 Annual Report prepared by minimizing the use of resources. Graphic design has been constructed on the use of optimum page size and page area without being reduced by wastage and thus, enabled up to 40% savings in the number of papers compared to previous year. This means the same savings were also achieved in resources such as energy, water, yarn, paint and paper. Yeşil Atlas Magazine published with the support of Garanti Bank for 12 years, started to be published online in order to minimize paper consumption since 2010. Garanti contributes to create environmental awareness by causing 100% recyclable papers to be used for printing National Geographic Special Environment Issue. Cooperating with WWF, Garanti Bank gives direct support to environment and foundation by enabling its consumers to hold and use “Environmentalist- Bonus Credit Card” that was introduced to the service of consumers in 2000. They announced this application by their advertising activities.



**Figure**

[http://www.google.com.tr/search?q=çevreci+bonus+kart&hl=tr&prmd=imvns&source=lnms&tbnm=isch&ei=L3yPT5SADZH1sgaAx7TOBA&sa=X&oi=mode\\_link&ct=mode&cd=2&sqi=2&ved=0CBgQ\\_AUoAQ&biw=1271&bih=680](http://www.google.com.tr/search?q=çevreci+bonus+kart&hl=tr&prmd=imvns&source=lnms&tbnm=isch&ei=L3yPT5SADZH1sgaAx7TOBA&sa=X&oi=mode_link&ct=mode&cd=2&sqi=2&ved=0CBgQ_AUoAQ&biw=1271&bih=680)

3.

Philip Morris and Sabancı (Philsa) has shared with social stakeholders via its webpage that it has reduced energy consumption with eco-friendly technologies. Philsa ensures the formation of organic fertilizer (compost) from production wastes in order to support sustainable and ecologic agriculture. Having achieved 96.3% recycling with its waste management activities, Philsa ensures the recycling of 260 tons wastes that are composed of tobacco dust, treatment and grass following production ([http://www.kurumsalsosyal.com/tr-TR/haberler/2014\\_uretim-atiklari-organik-gubreyedonusturuluyor.aspx?search=sabanci](http://www.kurumsalsosyal.com/tr-TR/haberler/2014_uretim-atiklari-organik-gubreyedonusturuluyor.aspx?search=sabanci)).

Philsa states that carbon dioxide quantity released to the atmosphere has reduced by 1 million 600 thousand kg thanks to energy consumption reduction activities carried out since 2005 in Torbalı Factory.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

It can be seen that there is a relationship between the promotion strategies and key elements of marketing mix. In order to create effective promotional strategies, environmental influences should be considered. These strategies are affected by both internal and external conditions. External environments like technological, economic, socio-cultural; political-legal environments, and operating environments such as company resources, company goals and objectives and competition are very important for that strategy (Govoni, et. al, 1986, p.8-9). It can be indicated that there is a close link between the environment and promotional activities. As businesses became aware of the relationship between sustainability and environment, consumers became more and more sensitive about those issues. The Kyoto and Global Compact protocols, increasing number of environmental NGOs (Non-governmental organizations) (World Wild Life Fund (WWF), Greenpeace, UNEP, etc), increasing media coverage about environmental issues, together with the businesses becoming more sensitive to the environment and committing to the protocols, they all reveal the relationship between the businesses' internal and external effects and their promotion strategies.

In this context, as the corporations expressed in the Capital Magazine's research report are examined, it can be seen that the first five corporations' environmental sensitivity have reflected their promotional strategies as a part of sustainability. They all show their sensitivity about environment through the use of social responsibility projects within the context of advertising and public relations efforts. On the other hand, those corporations have used different communication methods in the process of explaining those efforts to their stakeholders. It can be seen that Koç Holding, Arçelik and Garanti Bank, they all used the environment as a theme both in their advertising and public relations efforts, while Turkcell and Sabancı Holding emphasized their environmental social responsibility projects on their web pages.

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