

Małgorzata KOSZEMBAR-WIKLIK¹
Silesian University of Technology
Faculty of Organization and Management
Institute of Management and Administration

PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE MARKETING OF PRODUCT INNOVATIONS

Summary. The success of organizations depend more and more on their ability and willingness to innovate. The very development of innovative products or technologies does not guarantee market success. Product commercialization requires the undertaking of marketing activities. For new technologies and products, the most effective solution is to develop brand image through public relations, in particular media relations. PR is becoming more and more significant in the model of the open approach to innovation in the era of development of social media. The aim of this article is to present the role of media relations in the process of introducing innovative products on the market. The analysis was based on a case study of a company showing an example of good practices of introducing new products by use of public relations activities.

Keywords: marketing of innovations, public relations, media relations, marketing

PUBLIC RELATIONS W MARKETINGU INNOWACJI PRODUKTOWYCH

Streszczenie. Sukcesy organizacji zależą dzisiaj coraz bardziej od ich podatności na innowacje. Samo opracowanie innowacyjnych produktów czy technologii nie gwarantuje sukcesu rynkowego. Komercjalizacja produktów wymaga podjęcia działań marketingowych. Najbardziej skuteczne w przypadku nowych technologii i produktów jest budowanie wizerunku marki przez działania public relations, a zwłaszcza media relations. PR nabiera szczególnego znaczenia przy modelu otwartego podejścia do innowacji oraz w dobie rozwoju mediów społecznościowych. Celem artykułu jest

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wskazanie na rolę media relations w procesie wdrażania innowacyjnych produktów. Analizę oparto na studium przypadku firmy, która może stanowić przykład dobrych praktyk wdrażania nowych produktów przy wykorzystaniu działań z zakresu public relations.

Słowa kluczowe: marketing innowacji, public relations, media relations, marketing

1. Innovativeness and product innovations

The term “innovation” is commonly used, and in the modern world it is a very capacious term, and originates from the Latin word *innovatio*, meaning renewal. Very often another Latin word highlights its origins: *novus* meaning novelty².

Innovations and innovativeness are inseparably connected with the activities of modern companies. Their success depends more and more on their ability and willingness to innovate which are becoming the decisive factor not only for the development and expansion of the organization, but often for its survival.

P. Niedzielski and K. Rychlik defined innovativeness as “a property of business entities or economies which denotes the ability to develop and implement innovations, and to absorb them, resulting from them being actively involved in innovative processes and from undertaking activities in that direction; also implying their involvement in obtaining the resources and skills necessary for participating in those processes”³. Innovativeness allows for the creation of innovations, because a company may not create innovations without being innovative. Innovativeness is the process in which new ideas are generated and implemented together with the inventions which, after being implemented in the organizational system, will constitute innovations⁴.

Innovations may also be understood as deliberate changes consisting in replacing old conditions with new ones – assessed positively on the basis of the criteria in the given organization. The colloquial meaning denotes something new and different from the previous solutions, a needed change for the better⁵. P.F. Drucker emphasized that innovation is a function of entrepreneurship, the tool of an entrepreneur used for the purpose of introducing change in the economic and social potential of companies, more seldom in the technical one⁶. M. Bratnicki and J. Strużyna share that opinion – they emphasize that entrepreneurship is

² Borowski P.F.: Przedsiębiorstwa XXI wieku. “Europejski Doradca Samorządowy”, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2011, p. 12.

³ Niedzielski P., Rychlik K.: Innowacje i kreatywność. University of Szczecin, Szczecin 2006, p. 23-24.

⁴ Younis A.I., Nor'Aini Y.: Innovation Creation and Innovation Adoption: A Proposed Matrix Towards a better Understanding. “International Journal of Organizational Innovation”, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2010, p. 312.

⁵ Janasz W., Koziol-Nadolna K.: Innowacje w organizacji. PWE, Warsaw 2011, p. 16.

a process whereby innovation is transformed into market opportunities or into development of a competitive advantage. In turn, innovation is a result of entrepreneurial undertakings and entrepreneurial strategies in a company⁷.

J.A. Schumpeter understood innovations in a broad sense, as:

1. introducing new products or improving the existing ones,
2. introducing a new or improved production method,
3. opening a new market,
4. applying a new method of selling or purchasing,
5. applying new raw materials or half-products,
6. introducing a new organization of production⁸.

R. Johnston believes the term of innovation “is applied not only to the first application of the given product or method of manufacturing, but also to the subsequent ones, when the changes are adopted by other companies, industry sectors or countries”⁹.

The 2005 Oslo Manual on innovations differentiates among product, process, organizational and marketing innovations¹⁰. For A. Pomykalski, product innovations are one type of technological innovations, “the term of technological innovation includes new products and processes, as well as significant technological changes in products and processes”¹¹. Product innovations are significant because the contemporary form of competition refers to new products, not prices. Market requirements are changing, and the new marketing approach assumes reacting to the needs and wishes of consumers¹². J. Lerner believes that for the good management of the innovation process, it is important to motivate the scientists who develop new ideas, and the main task of the governments is to create an environment in which companies may develop their entrepreneurship¹³. However, one has to take into account the growing impact of consumers on the product and marketing policy of companies, which is related to a high degree with the development of interactive online media.

The subject of a product innovation is, in particular, designing and manufacturing a new product with properties distinguishing it from the other products offered to clients. The marketing department should participate in the process of developing new products,

⁶ Drucker P.F.: *Innowacje i przedsiębiorczość. Praktyka i zasady*. PWE, Warsaw 1992, p. 42.

⁷ Bratnicki M., Strużyna J.: *Przedsiębiorczość i kapitał intelektualny*. Akademia Ekonomiczna, Katowice 2001, p. 28.

⁸ Schumpeter J.A.: *Teoria rozwoju gospodarczego*. PWN, Warsaw 1960, p. 60.

⁹ Janasz W., Kozioł K.: *Determinanty działalności innowacyjnej przedsiębiorstw*. PWE, Warsaw 2007, p. 15.

¹⁰ Podręcznik Oslo. *Zasady gromadzenia i interpretacji danych dotyczących innowacji. Pomiar działalności naukowej i technicznej*, OECD 2005, p. 37, <http://www.uwm.edu.pl/ciitt/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Podrecznik-OSLO-MANUAL1.pdf>, 11.05.2016.

¹¹ Pomykalski A.: *Innowacje*. Łódź University of Technology, Łódź 2001, p. 26.

¹² Oliver G.: *Marketing Today*. Prentice Hall, New York 1990, p. 7-12.

¹³ Lerner J.: *The Architecture of Innovation: The economics of creative organisations*. Harvard Business Review Press/Oxford University Press, 2012.

by providing information from the market relating to the expectations of product properties, or even by collecting ideas for new products from clients. Such an approach is characteristic of the modern model of the open approach to the innovation process. In traditional models it was assumed that a company develops products with its own resources, and that it needs to concentrate on its internal research and development departments¹⁴. In the open model, the external environment of an enterprise is viewed as very significant.

C.K. Prahalada and V. Ramaswamy distinguish four crucial elements conditioning the co-creation of new products by clients: dialogue, access, risk assessment and transparency¹⁵.

At the “Hy! Summit”¹⁶ conference in Berlin in 2014, it was emphasised that a third innovation actor (in addition to corporations and investors) is the “digital crowd”. It was demonstrated that, for example, in the case of start-ups, an impact is visible in the crowdsourcing and social financing of the given project. It was indicated that “the assessment of the justifiability of the execution of a certain idea (development of a product or service), thanks to its financing by potential consumers, is beneficial both from the point of view of product development and from the point of view of a major corporation. Independent innovators thus receive the means which allow them to implement their idea, while big corporations reduce the investment risk, in a way “testing” the market and the potential demand of the so-called early adopters’ group. Crowdfunding is playing the role of an idea-laboratory and innovation accelerator”¹⁷.

What is also significant is the process of product commercialization, because an innovative product is not enough nowadays, you need to launch marketing activities that will help to introduce it in the market.

Many authors list three significant phases of an investment process: idea creation, development and introduction¹⁸. In each phase, it is important that the company undertake suitable marketing activities:

- *Phase of idea creation* – the role of marketing at this stage is to analyze the market, assess the needs, capacities, dynamics, competitors, existing technological solutions, etc.

¹⁴ As indicated, among others, by Chesbrough H.W.: Open innovation. The New imperative for creating and profiting from technology. Harvard Business School Press, Boston 2003.

¹⁵ Prahalad C.K., Ramaswamy V.: The future of competition. Co-creating unique value with customers. Harvard Business School Press, Boston 2004.

¹⁶ The owners and coordinators of hy! Summit describe an organization as an international network and platform of meetings of European technological and economic innovators.

¹⁷ Mirocha Ł.: Hy! Summit Berlin 2014. O potrzebie nowych modeli innowacji w Europie, 2014, <http://czlowiekitechnologie.com/hy-summit-berlin-2014-o-potrzenie-nowych-modeli-innowacji-w-europie-2/>, 9.09.2016.

¹⁸ Podręcznik Oslo...

- *Development phase* – looking for the investors for the innovative idea, using new methods of testing the product in the market, etc.
- *Introduction* – looking for new distribution channels, determining the price and price flexibility, promoting the innovation.

In each phase, the people responsible for marketing need to demonstrate flexibility and to adapt the marketing activities to the changing requirements of the clients, and to adapt the marketing tools to the type of innovation.

Innovation marketing has a specific character and requires a new way of thinking of the market, combating routine, developing new needs and actively listening to the environment, but also taking into account the changes in the media market and in the way the clients perceive the media.

2. Innovation marketing

Marketing innovation is a social and management process consisting in developing, offering and exchanging new research solutions in practical applications, and implementing them for the purpose of satisfying the needs of people and institutions¹⁹.

Innovation marketing means the need to:

- segment the innovation market – to determine the target market and the projected market,
- conduct marketing research and use it for making decisions,
- prepare marketing plans and implement them,
- select the marketing tools used in the process of promoting products and services.

Marketing is a significant tool in various models of the innovation process.

The three popular models of the innovation process are as follows:

- Supply model of the innovation process – the innovations originate from scientific research and experiments.
- Demand model of the innovation process – the innovations are inspired by the research into the market and into clients' needs.
- Demand-supply (combined) model – the innovations result from the scientists' research and the research into clients' needs.

The position of marketing and public relations in various models is illustrated below.

¹⁹ Niestrój R.: Tożsamość i wizerunek marketingu. PWE, Warsaw 2009, p. 206.

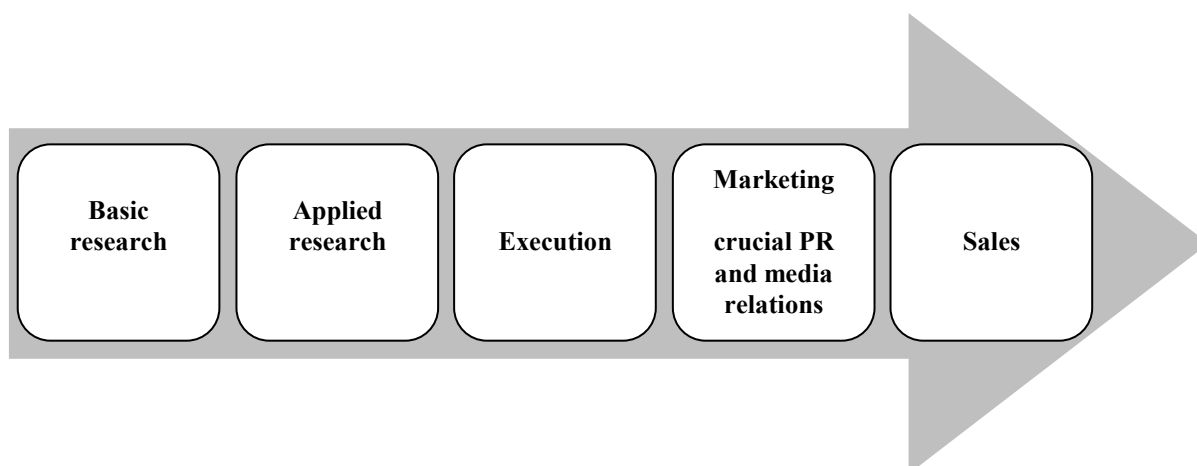


Fig. 1. Supply model

Rys. 1. Model podaży

Source: Own study on the basis of: Rudzewicz A., Strychalska-Rudzewicz A.: Strategie produktów innowacyjnych. University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Olsztyn 2013, p. 157; Golińska-Pieszyńska M.: Polskie praktyki innowacyjne. Aspekty teoretyczne i badania empiryczne. Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw 2011, p. 200.

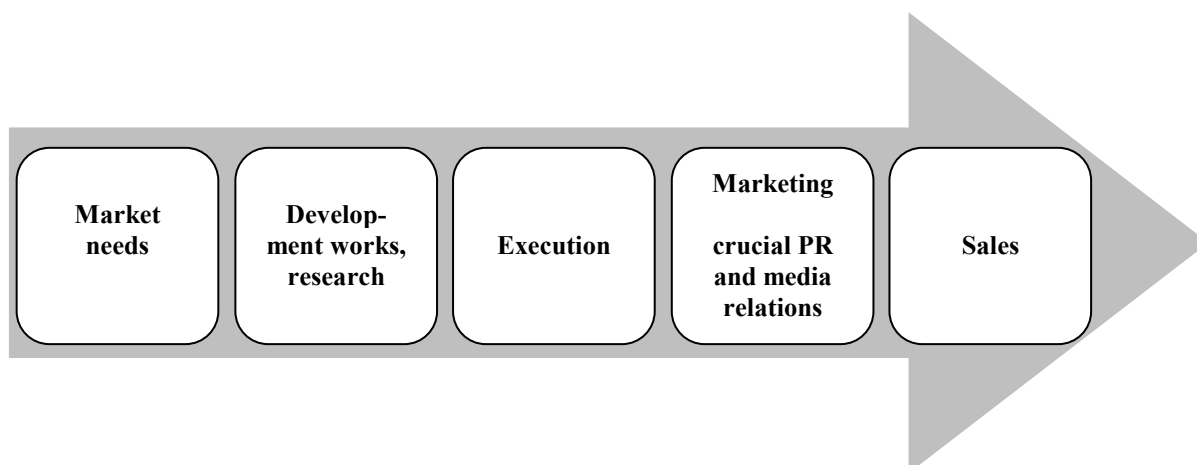


Fig. 2. Demand model

Rys. 2. Model popytu

Source: Own study on the basis of: Rudzewicz A., Strychalska-Rudzewicz A.: Strategie produktów innowacyjnych. University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Olsztyn 2013, p. 157; Golińska-Pieszyńska M.: Polskie praktyki innowacyjne. Aspekty teoretyczne i badania empiryczne. Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw 2011, p. 200.

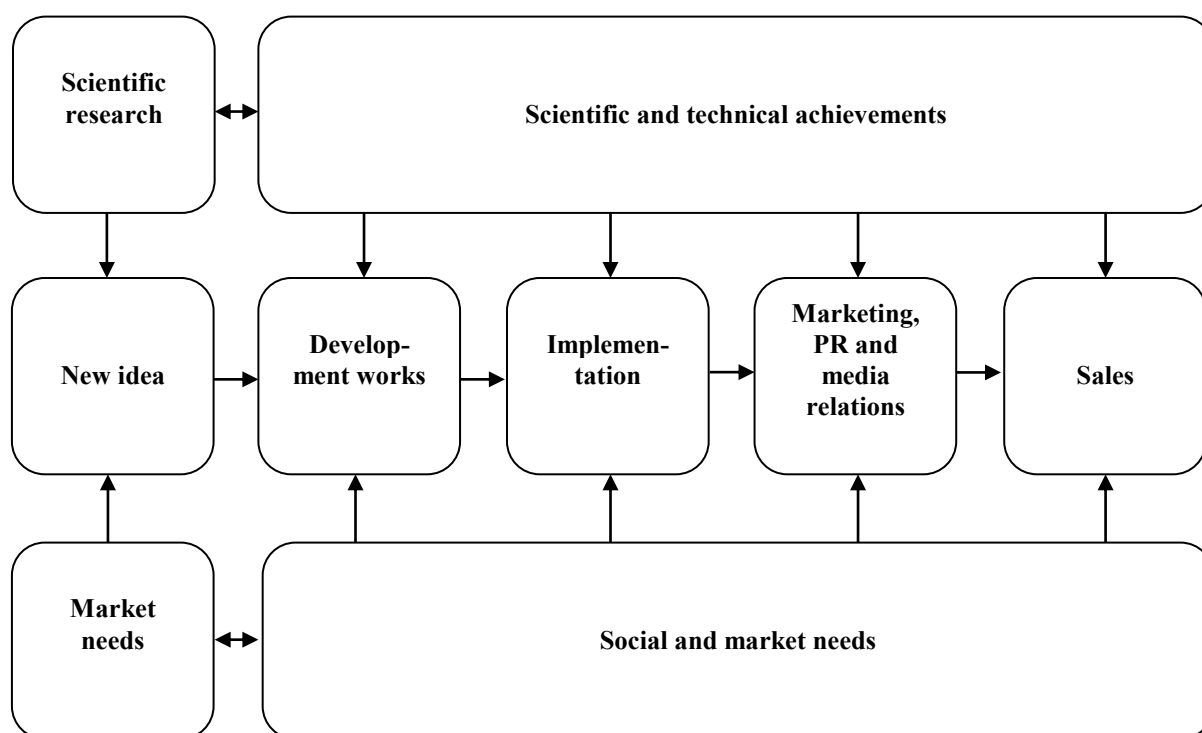


Fig. 3. Demand and supply model

Rys. 3. Model popytu i podaży

Source: Own study on the basis of: Rudzewicz A., Strychalska-Rudzewicz A.: Strategie produktów innowacyjnych. University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Olsztyn 2013, p. 157; Golińska-Pieszyńska M.: Polskie praktyki innowacyjne. Aspekty teoretyczne i badania empiryczne. Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw 2011, p. 200.

The role of marketing in introducing novelties to the market is obvious, but a deeper reflection is needed into the issue of what tools will be most effective in various categories of innovations. The most effective form of communication in the case of new products and technologies, seems to consist in public relations, because they are perfect for developing brands and developing the innovative image of companies and products.

3. *Public relations and media relations in innovation marketing*

Public relations (PR) may be defined as: “A system of managing the communication between the organization and its environment (the public)²⁰. For the purposes of analyzing the role of PR in creating innovations, there also exists the definition proposed by the International PR Association which treats public relations as a function of management: “Public relations are the management function of continuous and planned character, with which the organization obtains and maintains the understanding, liking and support of the

²⁰ Grunig J.E., Hunt T.: *Managing Public Relations*. Holt Rinehart and Winston Inc., New York 1984, p. 7.

ones it is interested in or may be interested in the future – by researching their opinions of the organization for the purpose of the maximum adaptation to its objectives and activities, in order to achieve – through planning, broad dissemination of information – better cooperation with society and more effective fulfillment of its interests”²¹.

In the case of innovative products, PR will be significant both at the stage of collecting opinions, disseminating information on the products, and at the stage of their market assessment. The role of PR is similar also in the case of other innovations.

As for their external functions, public relations cover a broad range of activities aimed at creating a positive image, increasing brand recognition and maintaining good relationships with the company’s external environment, thanks to a system of two-way communication. The positive image of a company, through a halo effect, is transferred to the products implemented by it. Public relations are a form of communication that is more credible than advertising or sales promotion activities, and thus it increases the probability of generating a positive image of the product and the company.

In the case of innovative products and technologies, it’s the media relations that play a significant role.

Media relations consist of maintaining good relations with journalists who publish information in the media (press, radio, TV, Internet) on the achievements of the organization in the scope of new products, and technological and other solutions. Media relations comprise: interviews with journalists, press conferences, video conferences, information sent out to the media, and online press centers. However, media relations have been abruptly changing recently as a result of the development of the Internet. Although the functionality of the Internet originates, to a high degree, from the analysis of social behaviors and needs, its development significantly affects the changes in perceiving the media and participating in them. There is also a noticeable and increasing impact of clients on media information, which can be most clearly seen in Web 2.0. The development of social media has allowed Internet users to publish information at a scale that had not been possible before. Nowadays social media tools are available for small, medium and large companies and provide a lot of possibilities of controlling their own communications. The sources of information that the journalists use are also transforming, because the Internet is becoming such a primary source. That is why the positioning of information on a given company in search engines plays such a major role, as important as the information itself presented on the official website. However, these are examples of passive activities. The development of the image of innovative products requires an active information and promotion policy. Initiating interviews, sending out

²¹ Piasta L.: Public relations. Istota, techniki. Centrum Informacji Menadżera, Warsaw 1996, p. 6.

information to the media, or cooperating with journalists give more opportunities of delivering the information to clients.

What also plays a significant role in the public relations activities for new technologies is: *establishing direct contacts* with representatives of the environment, *and relationships with investors*. The active search for partners may be executed by organizing and participating in scientific conferences and seminars, during which you can present your new technological solutions. In turn, *relationships with investors* consist of maintaining contacts with stockholders and other participants in the financial community, often resulting from the legal requirements associated with the listing of the given company in the Stock Exchange.

Communication with the environment also requires developing one's *own materials* (brochures, prospectuses, folders) and *developing online information*. Online information comprises of both the traditional Internet website, and the social media (blogs, microblogs, social networking websites). Such forms of communication allow not only to present novelties, but also to demonstrate that the company is open to dialogue. Due to the interactive character of social media, companies are able to get to know the opinions of the environment on the products or activities undertaken.

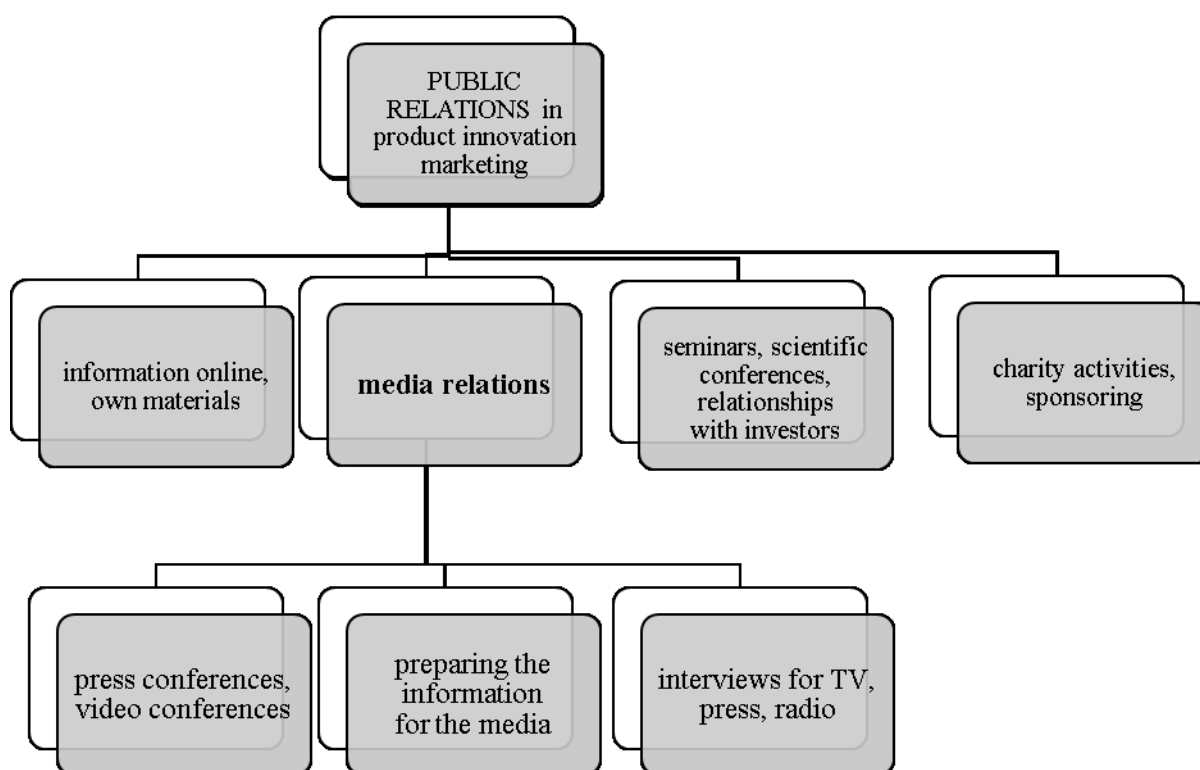


Fig. 4. Public relations tools in the process of implementing new products and technologies

Rys. 4. Narzędzia public relations w procesie wdrażania nowych produktów i technologii

Source: Own study.

Significant public relations activities also include *charity activities* – for the purpose of showing the “human face of the organization” or *sponsoring*, with which the product may be presented at various types of events.

It should be remembered that public relations also have an *internal function* addressed to employees. Suitable communication with employees, the use of techniques for integrating staff, are conducive towards developing a good image inside the organization which is then transferred to its external image. Good public relations start within the organization.

Public relations are becoming particularly significant in the above-mentioned modern attitude towards innovations which assumes the so-called open innovations. That term was coined by H. Chesbrough who acknowledges that in that model, companies should make use of both external and internal ideas in their processes related to innovations. The higher the number of external sources of company’s innovation activity, the higher the openness²². The role of external partners is important at every stage of innovation generation: development and selection of ideas, their transformation into innovative solutions, commercialization and innovation diffusion.

The external partners in the model of open innovations are: suppliers, clients, competitors as well as research units and higher education institutions²³.

O. Gassmann and E. Enkel distinguish three categories of open innovation processes: centripetal processes – where the innovations flow “towards the inside”, from the environment to the company; centrifugal processes – where the innovations flow “outside”, from the enterprise to the environment, and mixed processes that combine both types through cooperation²⁴. The first two types are based on a one-way flow of information, and the last one – on two-way flow.

Public relations, the task of which is to communicate with the broadly understood environment (both internal and external) plays its roles in the open innovation model. At the stage of generating the ideas, it may use online communication, by which ideas for new products are generated on online networking websites. Some companies organize competitions for ideas for new products, or they present the ideas for new products to be discussed by the online community.

In the case of the mixed model based on two-way communication, it is very important to obtain the cooperation of virtual communities. Such activities are based on P. Levy’s rule of collective intelligence which assumes that the ability to find the solution to a problem is better than the best individual solutions in that group, in the sense that no one knows

²² Chesbrough H.: *Open Business Models: How to Thrive in The New Innovation Landscape*. Harvard Business School Press, Boston 2006.

²³ Buganza T., Verganti R.: *Open Innovation Process to Inbound Knowledge. Collaboration with Universities in Four Leading Firms*. “European Journal of Innovation Management”, No. 12(3), 2009, p. 306-325.

²⁴ Gassmann O., Enkel E.: *Towards a Theory of Open Innovation: Three Core Process Archetypes*, [in:] *Proceedings of the R&D Management Conference (RADMA)*, Sessimbra 2004.

everything, whereas the collective of humankind has greater knowledge²⁵. Within the context of Web 2.0, the notion of collective intelligence refers to the activities of a high degree of cooperation among users, and to the “added value” resulting from those activities.

A. Sopińska calls that phenomenon “digital socialism” which companies may use in innovation processes, for example by: motivating a large, self-organized virtual community to do unpaid work on a given project, developing new applications through external users, using spontaneous creativity or allowing the members of the virtual community to use the beneficial effects of network cooperation in developing innovations²⁶.

The cooperation with the online community may be a one-way process, where we only obtain ideas, or a two-way process of exchanging information aimed at developing innovations. The access to the ideas generated by the virtual community is becoming the advantage of open innovation models. The possibility to better recognize the expectations and preferences of current and potential clients, and thus to adapt the offer to their needs, constitutes the added value.

Social media, such as forums, blogs and microblogs, social networking websites and content media, play a concrete role in such communication. The very name “social media” means that they are based on interaction and co-generated by their users. That is why they are the perfect place for discussing new ideas and a good platform for spreading viral marketing, initiated by members of the community. In this manner they are also becoming the participants in the process of commercializing innovative products.

4. An example of good practices in implementing innovative products with the use of media relations

An example of good practices is Stanusch Technologies²⁷ – a leader in the market of chatbots in Poland. The company has been formally operating since 2007. Earlier, since 2000, it had been conducting research work as Stanusch Consulting. The main product of that company is a computer program – chatterbot, or a “virtual advisor”. The product of the Stanusch Technologies company was first implemented in the Polish market in 2008. At present, over 70 chatbots are working in various production and service companies. The virtual advisor – Ewa, developed by the team of the Stanusch Technologies company – is one of the most advanced products of this type in the world. It holds a gigantic knowledge base and continues to expand it.

²⁵ Lévy P.: *Collective Intelligence – Mankind's Emerging World In Cyberspace*. Perseus Books, 1997.

²⁶ Sopińska A.: *Otwarte innowacje bazujące na mądrości „tłumu” – podstawa sukcesu współczesnego przedsiębiorstwa*. “Zarządzanie i Finanse”, No. 4/1. University of Gdańsk, Gdańsk 2013, p. 292-297.

²⁷ Prepared on the basis of <http://www.stanusch.com/>.

The broad possibilities of applying chatbots result from their fundamental benefits – reducing costs, developing the image of a modern company, and round-the-clock availability. Moreover, chatbots may be used in companies from various sectors and appear as different characters: as virtual advisors, sales representatives, teachers (e-learning) or coaches. Chatbots are usually placed on online websites, but may also be used on profiles in the media such as on Facebook. Works on improving chatbots and expanding their knowledge bases, using semantic searches, are under way.

Since 2011 the company has also been offering a “virtual hostess” being a holographic representation of a person. The virtual hostess makes the impression of being an actual person you can talk to. The hostess presents the company offer, can provide precise answers to the questions asked by the client, and it recognizes whether it’s already talked to the given person. Such a modern and interactive form of communication allows for presenting any product in any place.

Despite the advantages of chatbots and virtual hostesses, they require strong marketing support due to the low recognition of such products in Poland.

By developing brand and product recognition, the Stanusch Technologies company conducts public relations activities, while particularly concentrating on cooperation with the media.

Table 1

Main activities of the Stanusch Technologies company in the scope of public relations
in the implementation of chatbots and virtual hostesses

Media relations:	Between 2008-2014 there appeared a lot of information in the form of interviews with the CEO or articles on online websites.
Media information Interviews	Among others, the information on Stanusch Technologies, within the context of implementing virtual advisors, was published on such websites as: cio.cxo.pl – Magazine of IT Directors; Bankier.pl – Polish Financial Portal; PAP.pl – Polish Press Agency, PRportal.pl; e-biznes.pl, businessman.pl; alert finansowy.pl; euro bankier.pl; eGospodarka.pl, prnews.pl, Puls biznesu- pb.pl; media2.pl; frontpr.pl; Computerworld.pl; technavio.com.
	In the Internet, you can still find interviews conducted with the company CEO by the following TV stations: B2B TV, TV Biznes.
Website	On the company website, we are welcomed by the chatbot named Ewa. The Company presents: its products, references for the products already implemented, information for investors, as well as links to the information on the company published in various media.
Social networking media	The company also communicates through Facebook, where you can find, among others, the information on its products, as well as received awards and distinctions.
Participation in seminars and conferences	The company CEO presents the products and the company at numerous exhibitions and conferences.
Awards and distinctions	The company has received numerous awards in various competitions, e.g. the title of the most innovative product for chatbot, the title of innovative company, or the distinction in the category of small and medium enterprises in the competition IT Leaders. The above events were also reflected in the online press.

Source: Own study.

The company basically does not use any traditional advertising. All information activities are based on media relations and various activities related to public relations, thus growing trust for its brand. For high technologies such trust is very important, and public relations are much more credible than advertising. The growing skepticism towards advertising and the broad access to information from the development of social networking media, result in changes in the communication with the environment.

The Management Board of Stanusch Technologies SA is trying to conduct a broad information strategy and concentrates on relationships with investors. The active information policy of the company is visible in numerous interviews with journalists, and is usually initiated during breakthrough events – implementing a new product, being listed on New Connect, or receiving awards and distinctions. It develops its relationships with its environment by participating in seminars and conferences. It is open to contacts with the media. It successively develops the image of an expert in the area of chatbots, development of modern websites and virtual hostesses.

Taking into account the significance that social networking media are enjoying nowadays, the management board of the company should take into consideration starting an expert blog which would be more interactive and would constitute a good source of feedback from the market. At the same time, journalists could make use of the company's expert blog. As for the method of managing innovations in the company, in this case it is described as "leading" by E. Diedrichs, K. Engel and K. Wagner²⁸, i.e. when the company systematically implements innovative projects. When implementing those innovations on a broad scale, the company successfully applies activities in the scope of public relations. Public relations may be applied both at the stage of generating ideas, selecting and commercializing them, and at the stage of their assessment after implementation in the market.

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