Title critically discuss the ways unicef engage media techniques in their communi...

Sociology, Communication

Introduction

Communicationstrategies are designed to help governmental and non-governmental organisations communicate effectively to meet core objectives. In the new digital age, communicating through the media has become an effective way of targeting audiences and persuading them to act by either providing support or givingmoney(Goodman and Hirsch, 2010: 2). The non-governmental organisation (NGO) UNICEF provides an example of how the effective use of persuasive media techniques in a communications strategy can help to generate capital and support. UNICEF uses a number of different techniques, which all help to raise awareness of the objectives that are trying to be achieved (Dijkzeul and Moke, 2005: 673). With particular focus on children, UNICEF is able to communicate with audiences to obtain humanitarian assistance. A higher degree of financial independence is acquired and subsequently used for humanitarian and development activities (Dijkzeul and Moke, 2005: 673). It is unlikely that such assistance would be obtained without the use of various media techniques. This essay will critically discuss the ways UNICEF engage media techniques in their communications' strategy.

Media Techniques and Political Communications

The main objective of most media messages is to persuade or encourage the audience to believe or do something (MLP, 2014: 1). In doing so, a number of different techniques are used to grab the audience's attention and to establish trust and credibility (Erwin, 2014: 104). One technique that is used

by the media is the use of direct quotations from identified sources. This makes the reader believe the story being told and is often used as a powerful motivator to encourage the reader to act, for example, by giving money or purchasing something (MLP, 2014: 1). Where direct quotations are used, it is more likely that the message being conveyed will be successful received as the audience will believe what is being said. Such techniques are referred to as the " language of persuasion" and are essential media literacy skills (Changing Minds, 2013: 1). This was recognised by Lippmann who believed that persuasion had become a " self-conscious art and a regular organ of popular government (Denton and Kuypers, 2007: 1). Persuasion is thus a way of creating consent from individuals about a particular premise and is capable of modifying political communications in a very influential way. Unless communications are persuasive, it is doubtful that they will be effective since persuasion is the main communication tool that is required by the media. Governments use persuasion as a means of obtaining consent from the messages being conveyed, also known as political communication. Political communication is considered to have the following four elements; 1) short-term orientation; 2) based upon specific objectives; 3) primarily mediated; and 4) audience centred. Political communication is not exclusive to the political world as non-political actors also use this type of communication as a way of communicating messages to the public. This is generally done by organisations that have a political objective such as; non-governmental organisations (NGO's).

An NGO is an organisation that is separate and distinct from governments and profitable businesses. Although NGO's can be funded by governments and businesses, they are usually set up by ordinary citizens to further an agenda (Welch, 2000: 1). Whilst the agenda's of many NGO's will differ, the methods of communication that are used will be similar in that they will all seek to effectively communicate their objectives to the targeted audience. The primary objective of most NGO's is to ensure thathuman rightsare being fully protected. Although NGO's from different jurisdictions will not always have the samegoals, they will still be structured in a similar manner. This is because NGO's generally seek to promote human rights worldwide, which requires them to co-operate with governments and the United Nations (Wong, 2012: 37). NGO's are also important in helping to bring public interest matters before the courts (Wadham, 2001: 1). The mass media is a useful tool that allows political communications of NGO's to be effectuated, yet social, cultural and psychological problems are usually associated with media content and use (Perse, 2001: 1). It was stressed by Young that modern society engulfs its members through the media, educationand participation within the marketplace (Young, 1999: 82). The media is capable of articulating beliefs by adopting various ideological approaches. It has been said by Croteau and Hoynes that the media do not promote a singular perception of ideology and instead communicate a number of different ideological perceptions (Croteau and Hoynes, 2012: 154). They noted that social ideologies are more domineering of society than mainstream ideologies because of the fact that people pay as much attention to street scenes, housing and clothing as they do to the commentary when watching

international news (Thompson, 1995: 176). Arguably, it is clear from these assertions that the media is extremely powerful in influencing the minds of individuals, which is why it is a form of communication that is commonly used by NGO's to further their agenda's. The media is capable of shaping an audiences subjectivity through the representation of ideological belief's. NGO's thereby benefit from using media techniques to persuade their targeted audience to act in a certain manner.

The media is extremely powerful in persuading the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of society through the use of propaganda. Propaganda is a form of communication that influences an audience to act based on a particular agenda. Propaganda is used as a means of generating emotional responses to messages that are produced to influence societal attitudes towards a particular cause or position. NGO's often use propaganda to fulfil their objectives and are thus considered effective cultural propaganda disseminators (Cull et al; 2003: 193). NGO's have been considered politics of the poor on the basis that they represent political ideologies (Karim, 2001: 92). Political ideology is a set of ideas which represent the objectives, expectations and actions of a political party. A broad range of belief systems exist within different political parties and have generally been acquired from doctrines, ideals, myths, principles and social movements. Ideology is a system that is made up of values and beliefs " regarding the various institutions and processes of society that is accepted as fact or truth by a group of people" (Sargent, 2008: 2). Political ideology therefore comprises the views of political parties on how the world should be. This allows political

parties to allocate social values (Easton, 1971: 129) and determine what is considered an ' ideal' world. There are different views and opinions of ideological theory, though ideology is largely driven by competing groups in society who strive for hegemony (Hall, 1997: 13). Hegemony happens when the most dominant in society promotes, through the media andculture, a set of ideals that members of that society must conform to (Allan, 2004: 6). This is beneficial for NGO's who use the media to establish an ideological perception of the rights in which they are trying to protect. In deciding whether certain behaviours conform to society, the set of ideals that have been created within that society will need to be considered by the media when deciding what messages need to be conveyed. Many believe that this is unfair and problematic as ideology only serves the interests of one segment of society over all other segments (Curra, 2000: 6). This prejudices many parts of society as certain groups may not benefit from the established ideals that are created. As pointed out by Brown et al; ideology may only be beneficial to certain ethnic groups, genders or religions (Brown et al; 2010: 9). This does not provide an accurate reflection of the whole of society and whilst ideals are necessary in helping people to identify what is right and wrong, it seems unacceptable to segregate certain parts of society. This may, however, be necessary when protecting the rights of certain individuals. Political ideologies are subject to further critique on the basis that they do not consider the needs of modern society (Stankiewicz, 2012: 408), yet as pointed out by Selinger; " There is no politics without ideology" (Selinger, 1975: 99). In effect, this appears to demonstrate that all political communications will have some element of ideology as moral judgements

will be contained within them. Effectively, the objectives of NGO's will be based upon ideological beliefs and will mostly have a political objective. An example of this can be seen in relation to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which is an NGO that provides humanitarian and development assistance to mothers and children in underdeveloped countries. The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) created UNICEF on the 11th December 1946 to providefoodand healthcare to children that had been affected by World War II.

Although UNICEF is not operated by the government, it like many other NGO's largely relies upon governmental support and political communications. NGO's have, for some time, relied upon the mass media to expose violations of human-rights and encourage governments to put pressure on those found to be abusing them (Thrall et al; 2014: 3). This is intended to discourage human rights abuses from taking place and to help the perpetrators be put to justice. The effectiveness of this is arguable, though it seems as though greater support is being acquired by the likes of UNICEF as a result of this. Since the advancement of moderntechnologyUNICEF is now able to establish new communication strategies for channeling information politics via the internet (Chadwick and Phillip, 2008: 3). It is arguable whether the strategies that are being undertaken by UNICEF are effective in persuading audiences to support their cause, though it seems likely given UNICEF's use of the media. The media is largely proficient in influencing society of certain ideological perceptions through television programmes, newspapers, magazines, films and radio

programmes (Long and Wall, 2009; 285). These forms of communication are used in a way that manipulates societal values and beliefs and will continue to influence the ways in which we think about things whether consciously or subconsciously (Kenix, 2010: 1). Not only does the media send out ideological messages to the public but media systems have also been intertwined into society's ideological framework. This highlights the power of the media in shaping individuals values and beliefs within society. UNICEF's campaigns are mainly in the form of mass media, radio programmes, posters, street plays and localised outreach (UNICEF, 2014: 1). Because of this, a wider range of support will be acquired. UNICEF is reaching out to a broader audience, which will generate a huge amount of support and funding that would not otherwise be available. Arguably, it is imperative that the media techniques being used in UNICEF's communications strategy are effective in helping to shape ideological views on the rights of children. UNICEF is an advocate of children's rights and so it is necessary for UNICEF to communicate how these rights are being violated and what protections need to be in place. This will help UNICEF to gain support and the message UNICEF is trying to put across will be better received by the public.

Communications Strategy

The communications strategy of UNICEF is vital in strengthening human development and avoiding missed opportunities. An ineffective communications strategy will generally yield poor results and stifle the development of UNICEF (UNDP, 2014: 1). UNICEF's targeted audience will not receive the message that is being portrayed. This will prevent UNICEF from

developing, which will impact its success.. Effective communications are important skills NGO's need to survive and be successful (KDID, 2013: 28). To make an impact, UNICEF will thus be required to use effective means of communication to ensure that their views and opinions are heard. In doing so, they will most likely face a number of difficult challenges because of the fact that it has become increasingly difficult to deliver to society complex humanitarian crises. It is also difficult to explain to society who is involved in certain humanitarian crisis' because of how widespread they generally are (ICRC, 2005: 673). A huge amount of NGO's currently strive for media attention, thereby highlighting the need to have effective communication strategies in place (Thrall et al; 2014: 19). UNICEF must adopt a coherent and credible approach when conveying public communication so that its message can be heard. It has been said that in order to understand political communication, one must understand how consent is created (Denton and Kuypers, 2007: 1). UNICEF will thus be required to communicate messages in a way that allows consent to be obtained, which will need to be included within the communications strategy of UNICEF. A good communications strategy will help to certify good organisational branding and positioning, which will help to attract staff, donors and volunteers (KDID, 2013: 28).

Successful branding through media communications will put an NGO in a desirable position within the community, which will help to garner support and belief from the public. This will require NGO's to be completely transparent so that the messages in which they are trying to put across can be clearly communicated (Thrall et al; 2014: 19). Unless UNICEF adopts a

transparent and clear approach, it will be difficult to gain support and belief from the public (Lilleker, 2006: 4). Public support is, however, crucial to the implementation of change (Rabinowitz, 2013: 3). Without public support, it is doubtful that UNICEF would be as successful as they are. It is debatable what the best techniques for gaining public support are, though an effective communications strategy that takes into account UNICEF's agenda and identifies points that will require persuasive communication will most likely prove successful. It is important that the communications strategy identifies the approaches and tools that are needed to make a particular event more effective. In developing a communications strategy, it first needs to be established what UNICEF is trying to achieve. Subsequently, it will then need to be considered what communications objectives will most likely support the objectives of the project (McManus, 1994: 58). The communications objectives of UNICEF will be those that are capable of being reached through various means of communications. Such objectives will also need a target audience. This will require UNICEF to consider who they are trying to reach. In reaching out to the target audience, UNICEF will need to develop appropriate messages which highlight the relevant issues; the actions that needs to be taken by the target audience; and the benefits of such action (KDID, 2013: 28). Once this has been done, UNICEF will then have to consider how these messages will be delivered. Different methods of communication will be considered depending upon the type of event that is being promoted such as; media conferences, social media, interviews, marketing, advertisements and news stories.

Given that UNICEF targets underdeveloped countries, it is likely that difficulties will be faced when considering the political objectives of various countries. Political communications are likely to vary from one country to another, which will create a number of problems. An effective communications strategy will seek to address these difficulties, though it will remain arguable whether they will prove sufficient in achieving certain objectives (Thrall et al; 2014: 19). In Africa, for example, the media seems to control those in power by reporting to citizens. Whilst this demands a degree of institutional independence from the political system, it has been said that there is actually a " clear interdependence between the media and political systems" (Windeck, 2014: 17). Information from political systems is usually exchanged for coverage in the media system and vice versa. The media consequently rely heavily on the supply of information from politics, whilst political bodies rely on the media to spread their messages and objectives (Windeck, 2014: 17). Political communication is an important tool in the political process, and will continue to influence politics. In effect, the political communications of certain countries will be driven by cultural and political factors, which may be difficult to overcome. Female genital mutilation is one area that UNICEF continues to campaign against, but is faced with many political objections from countries where FGM is prevalent; Asia, the Middle East and some parts of Africa (Gaber, 2007: 219). UNICEF are resultantly required to implement a strategy that is capable of strengthening the political commitment of governments.

UNICEF's Communications Strategy

There are three components of communication that are used by UNICEF to garner support and funding. These are; advocacy, social mobilisation and behaviour change communication (UNICEF, 2008: 7). Advocacy is used to inform and motivateleadershipso that a supportiveenvironmentcan be created. This will allow the objectives and development goals of the program to be achieved. Social mobilisation seeks to engage support and participation from various institutions, social and religious groups, and community networks. It is intended that the development objectives of UNICEF will be maintained through the use of social mobilisation and that greater demand will be generated. Behaviour change communication involves face to face discussions with a number of individuals and groups to motivate, inform, plan and problem-solve. It is anticipated that by using this technique, the objectives of UNICEF can be met (UNICEF, 2008: 7). Various conceptual models are used by UNICEF to implement communication including ACADA, P-Process and COMBI. The ACADA (Assessment, Communication Analysis, Design, Action) model is frequently used by UNICEF to use systematically-gathered data to link communications strategies to development problems. The P-Process model, developed by The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of PublicHealth/Center for Communication Programs (CCP), is used for the strategic planning of evidence based communication programmes and contains the following five steps; 1) analysis, 2) strategic design, 3) development and testing, 4) implementation and monitoring, and 5) evaluation and re-planning (UNICEF, 2008: 7).

The COMBI model uses a ten step process for communication planning, which are; 1) overall goal, 2) behavioural results/objectives, 3) situational market analysis, 4) results strategy, 5) plan of action, 6) management structure, 7) monitoring, 8) impact assessment, 9) scheduling, and 10) budget (UNICEF, 2008: 7). All three of these models seek to establish an effective communications strategy by analysing the different approaches that can be taken and considering the necessary steps needed. Analysis is integral to an effective communications strategy as it will enable any underlying issues to be identified and thereby dealt with accordingly. UNICEF undertakes a comprehensive analysis comprising of; the situation, the programme, the participants, the behaviours, and the communication channels (UNICEF, 2008: 7). The situation section describes the issues that are being addressed by UNICEF such as; childpoverty, disease, malnutrition and trafficking. This is based upon data that has been collected from local knowledge, programme documents and research. The data highlights the underlying social and cultural issues by demonstrating what changes need to be made to social structures and practices. The programme section is designed to establish where the objectives of UNICEF can be achieved by communication. The participant section establishes what people are required to achieve UNICEF's objectives. The behaviour section focuses on setting behavioural objectives and analysing the behaviours or practices that have been selected for change. Finally, the communication channels section considers the available communication channels that are applicable in achieving the objectives. Once the analysis has been completed, UNICEF will have identified the participants, behaviours and channels of communications

that are needed to encourage audience participation and accomplish its goals (UNICEF, 2008: 7).

In order to ensure that the objectives of UNICEF are being met by changing the attitude and behaviour of individuals, knowledge alone will not be sufficient. Instead, a supportive environment will also need to be established (UNICEF, 2008: 37). Therefore, whilst the communications strategy of UNICEF will need to instil knowledge into the community so that support can be acquired, a supportive environment will also need to be created. This will involve creating policies that improve access to services and by using leaders that help to promote social and behaviour change amongst various members of society. Resources will also need to be allocated for the programme activities that are to be carried out and positive change will be effectuated by using a combination of communication techniques. UNICEF believes that communication goes way beyond providing information to the targeted audience and instead argue that communication is vital for development (Dijkzeul and Moke, 2005: 673). UNICEF has therefore set up a development programme, also known as C4D, which aims to engage communities through understanding people's beliefs, values and social and cultural norms (Lenni and Tacchi, 2013: 16). This is achieved from listening to adults and children, identifying issues and working out solutions. This is considered a two way process that allows individuals to share knowledge and ideas through the use of various communication techniques that empower communities to take action in improving the lives of children (Lenni and Tacchi, 2013: 16). Advocacy is one technique UNICEF engages in its

communications strategy, which is the " act of supporting a cause to produce a desired change" (Save the Children, 2014: 1). Advocacy is capable of influencing governments to effect change by communicating with the media, elected officials and influential leaders.

Advocacy is able to encourage leaders to implement various changes such as; legal reform, policy decisions, addressing social and political barriers, and altering funding priorities. Advocacy efforts being used by UNICEF occur at global, national and sub-level and seek to influence the decisions of policy makers as well as political and social leaders. This is done through the creation of an enabling policy and legislative environment and by allocating resources appropriately to create and sustain social transformation (UNICEF, 2011: 1). For example, in 2010 when polio resurfaced in the Democratic Republic of Congo, there existed a lack of awareness of the disease and how it could be prevented. Influential leaders, such as Marco Kiabuta, did not believe that the vaccination of polio was necessary. After a number of debates with community mobilisers and leaders Kiabuta came to realise just how vital a vaccination was. This example demonstrates how effective communication techniques can make a huge difference in implementing change and possibly saving lives (UNICEF, 2011: 1). Advocacy is used by UNICEF to target political, business and social leaders at national and local levels. It is not used simply to create mass awareness but is also used as a means of generating change and leading to a specific action that is to be taken (UNICEF, 2010: 20). UNICEF uses advocacy to inform and motivate appropriate leaders to create a supportive environment by changing polices,

speaking out on critical issues, allocating resources and initiating public discussion. Communication is a powerful tool, which is why it is important for various media techniques to be adopted by NGO's such as UNICEF. Social mobilisation is another method of communication that is used by UNICEF to enlist participants, community networks, and religious groups to strengthen participation in various activities. This helps to engage and motivate partners and allies to raise awareness of UNICEF's development objectives through face-to-face dialogue. Partners and allies subsequently work together to target audiences and convey certain messages. Social mobilisation is used as a way to facilitate change through a range of players that are engaged in interrelated and complementary efforts (UNICEF, 2012: 1). An example of this can be seen in relation to the training community health workers in Madagascar received from UNICEF. The health workers were trained to provide outreach to families on various issues including, hand washing, vaccinating children, and not defecating in the open (UNICEF, 2012: 1). This is clearly an effective communication technique that is used by UNICEF as it allows certain individuals to be trained up so that they can pass their knowledge onto others. This has a domino like effect and will enable the views of UNICEF to be conveyed to a wider audience than that which would have been possible through advertisements alone. Social mobilisation is therefore an effective way of spreading messages to targeted audiences and helping to achieve the objectives of UNICEF, which is to provide assistance to mothers and children in underdeveloped countries. Behaviour change communication is another method that is used to address knowledge, attitudes and practices that are linked to programme goals. This is done by

providing participants with " relevant information andmotivationthrough well-defined strategies, using an audience-appropriate mix of interpersonal, group and mass media channels and participatory methods" (UNICEF/INDA, 2012, 1). Behaviour change communication strategies focus on the individual to effect change. In order for behavioural changes to happen on a larger scale, social changecommunication needsto be employed. This technique helps to define and address social influences in life and is currently being employed by UNICEF through the Social Ecological Model framework" (UNICEF/INDA, 2012, 1). The media techniques that are currently being used by UNICEF do appear effective in helping to persuade audiences to provide support. The more UNICEF does to spread its message, the more successful UNICEF will be in achieving its aims.

The Meena Communication Initiative in South Asia gives an example of how mass media and interpersonal communication is used to enhance the self-esteem and self-worth of children by enabling them to become familiar with life skills that are essential empowerment tools. The programme is primarily school based and is centred around a nine-year old girl called Meena who seeks to fight against the stigma that surrounds HIV/AIDS (UNICEF/INDA, 2012, 1). A radio station called ' Meena Radio' was launched in 2010 to communicate with children, their parents, educators and community leaders. This provides an effective means of communication and provides a platform for UNICEF's political beliefs to be heard. It is intended that the radio station's audience will be persuaded to act so that the voices of children and communities can be heard through the power of communication. This helps

to promote child survival, development, protection and participation (UNICEF, 2014: 1). It is clear that UNICEF uses a number of different media techniques in its communications strategy to achieve its objectives. Without the use of such techniques, the voices of children and communities would not be heard and UNICEF's message would not be delivered to its intended audience. It has been said that UNICEF " raises considerable funds and carries out strong communication on its own through its national committees, press centre and media team" (Dijkzeul and Moke, 2005: 683). This signifies the importance of having an effective communications strategy is in place as it can generate a significant amount of funding that would not otherwise be available. UNICEF also uses high profile figures to be its ambassadors who have been considered a highly effective in persuading society (Stromback, 2011: 42).

Conclusion

Overall, an effective communication strategy in an important tool for helping governmental and non-governmental organisations communicate effectively to meet core objectives. Given that UNICEF relies on voluntary donations from members of the public, government departments, charitable trusts and event organisers, it is important that they are capable of successfully communicating their objectives. In doing so, they will be required to persuade or encourage their audiences to provide support or funding so that UNICEF's end goals can be achieved. Given that UNICEF uses a number of different media techniques in its communications strategy, the approach that is currently being undertaken does appear workable. The media is a powerful

tool in the art of persuasion, which is what UNICEF needs in order to survive. The use of media techniques will help to raise awareness of UNICEF's objectives and obtain humanitarian assistance. It is unlikely that such assistance would be obtained without the use of various media techniques, which is why UNICEF's communications strategy does appear largely effective.

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