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PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY FOR THE FINNISH FASHION WEEK

Bachelor's Thesis 2015

ABSTRACT

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SUOMELA, SOILA

Public Relations Strategy for the Finnish Fashion Week

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The study was created in order to prepare a Public Relations strategy for a non- profit event, Finnish Fashion week 2015 organised by Osuuskunta Innetti. To be able to accomplish that, the research discusses the meaning of Public Relations as marketing tool and distinguishes Public Relations and its different strategies.

The aim of the study was to find out what particular public relations strategies to use for the Finnish Fashion Week to support their marketing plan and get as many people interested as possible in a cost effective way.

Public Relations stands for how the company manages the information between it and its publics. The theoretical part of this thesis is explaining what public relations is and what its strategies are by means of literature, articles and internet sources. The qualitative part was carried out by interviewing a public relations specialist. The study questions were what different PR strategies there are and what strategies are the most effective ones for a non-profit event.

In conclusion publicity with the help of social media and sponsorships found out to be the most important strategy for this particular research. Public Relations may be an important resource to help a company get the competitive advantage it needs.

TIIVISTELMÄ

KYMENLAAKSON AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

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Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli kehittää tiedotus – ja suhdetoimintastrategia Suomen muotiviikolle 2015, jonka järjestää Osuuskunta Innetti. Opinnäytetyö keskittyy mitä tiedotus – ja suhdetoiminta teoriassa tarkoittaa ja erittelee sen tärkeimmät strategiat tälle tutkimukselle.

Tiedotus – ja suhdetoiminnalla tarkoitetaan mitä tiedotusvälineitä käytetään yrityksen ja sen sidosryhmien välillä. Työssä selvitetään muu muassa strategiaa ja välineitä tulisi käyttää järjestettäessä Suomen muotiviikkoa tukien sen markkinointisuunnitelmaa. Opinnäytetyö on laadullinen tutkimus, jossa apuna on käytetty alan kirjallisuutta, artikkeleita ja Internet –lähteitä sekä haastattelua tiedotus – ja suhdetoiminta asiantuntijan kanssa.

Työn lopputuloksena voidaan sanoa, että tälle työlle tärkein strategia on julkisuus, mikä saavutettiin sosiaalisen median ja sponsori-työn avulla. Tiedotus – ja suhdetoiminta voi olla tärkeä voimavara, jonka avulla yritys saa tarvitsemaansa kilpailuetua

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

1 INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 The purpose of the research	7
1.2 The research objective	7
1.3 The research question	7
1.4. Methodology and methods	8
1.5 Structure of the thesis	8
2 PUBLIC RELATIONS	9
2.1. What is Public Relations?	9
2.2 Objectives of Public Relations	11
2.3 Challenges of Public Relations	12
2.4 Advantages of Public Relations	12
2.5 Tools of Public Relations	12
2.5.1 Publicity	15
2.5.2 Lobbying	16
2.5.3 Ad busting	16
2.5.4 Reactive PR	16
2.5.5 Word Of Mouth	17
2.6 Sponsorship	17
2.6.1 What is sponsorship	17
2.6.2 Sponsorship and non-profit event	18
3 NON-PROFIT EVENT	19
4. USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC RELATIONS	20
5. WHAT IS A PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY	21
5.1 Target Audience	22
5.2 Key Messages	22
5.3 Tactics	22

5.4 Creating a timeframe	22
5.5 Measuring the outcome	23
6. THE STRATEGY FOR FINNISH FASHION WEEK	24
6.1 What strategies and tactics to use	24
6.2 Key messages of Finnish Fashion Week	26
6.3 Timeframe	27
6.4 Measuring the outcome	28
6.5 Organisational analysis	29
6.6 SWOT	30
7. CONCLUSIONS	32
7.1 Necessity of the research to the organization	33
7.2 Self evaluation	34
7.3 Recommendations	35
SOURCES	36
APPENDICES	
Appendix 1. Survey for the PR agency	

1 INTRODUCTION

Helsinki is going to turn to a fashion show for three days when the Fashion week 2015 starts up and gather all the new designer names and fashion-minded people together. The Finnish Fashion Week is the first three day event all over Helsinki about fashion, new trends and fresh designers. The idea is known in other countries and bigger fashion cities, such as Milan, Paris, London and New York, but hasn't been in Finland to this extent before.

The difference between the previous Fashion events and this one is that Finnish Fashion week is a non-profit event. Finnish Fashion Week provides an opportunity for young fashion designers to show their talent and it is open for Finnish design and fashion design students.

The head of the organisation is Susanna Hillenbrand who has an extensive background in the fashion industry as a model and an organiser. She is one of the head organiser of the event and came up with this idea a long time ago but wasn't ready to start organising this big event until now. The Fashion week is planned to be held in the fall 2015.

The team organising the Fashion Week has worked in the fashion industry for 15 years. They have been organising big fashion shows and events such as NRJ Fashion Awards, that was held six years in a row. According to Susanna Hillenbrand the event won radio gala prizes and it was recognised in France and other countries that have a NRJ radio channel. (Hillenbrand 2014)

After organising big events the team decided to take the next level and make it bigger. The Fashion week celebrates the Finnish designers, who could not otherwise get the publicity or contacts. It is an exclusive chance for new designers to show what they have to offer and hopefully get a contract with a larger fashion companies. Fashion Week is concentrating on showing the Finnish designer's new outfits and styles with the help of some sponsors. At this stage the main venue is Aleksanterinteatteri and the main partners are Muotikaupanliitto and Goldier. There are other proposed partners as well but that is still to be released.

1.1 The purpose of the research

This thesis focuses on Public Relations and its strategies for a non-profit event. The aim of this thesis is to explore the meaning of public relations when organizing a non-profit event and find out what strategy would be the best for this particular event. The thesis will not only discuss the importance of PR for companies, but also why the stakeholders of an organization play a big a role in organisations' tactical and strategic implementation.

1.2 The research objective

The objective of the research is to create an effective public relations strategy for a non-profit event. The idea was to concentrate on the elements in public relations that would best support the company's image and to give important insight to the subject for the Finnish Fashion Week. This thesis supports the planning process of the Finnish Fashion Week 2015.

1.3. The research question

The research objective was to gain more information about PR and its strategies and based on that, figure out an effective PR strategy for non-profit event Finnish Fashion Week 2015. In order to do that the research had to answer the following questions: What is the concept of PR and what are its strategies? How to build an effective PR strategy for a non-profit event?

1.4. Methodology and methods

The research methods are usually put in two different categories; quantitative research methodology and qualitative research methodology. The differences in the methodologies are the research objectives, the research problem, what kind of form the research had as well as the emphasis of the research.

Qualitative research aims more to depth understanding of the consumer and behaviours whereas quantitative is concentrated on the amount and the study are presented through numerical or monetary terms. (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad 6-7, 2010) This research uses qualitative methodology because in order to plan PR strategy, the study needs larger understanding about the subject and this is needed when the research problem deals with an event that is a year or possibly two years after the research. Qualitative research methodology is more suitable for this research because the key purpose of it is to find only the information that influences the Finnish Fashion Week.

In-depth interviews were used as a research method. The interview was conducted in Australia with a local Public Relations agency called Promedia and its employee Holly Small. The method was one-on-one interview and due to busy schedule; the interviewee answered last 5 questions via e-mail. The questions were chosen based on the studied literature as well from the conversations the author had with the commissioner.

1.5 The structure of the thesis

The first part of the thesis is introducing the concept of public relations and its tools and strategies. The research also discusses sponsorship and social media since they play a big role in the strategy planning. The second part introduces the company, Osuuskunta Innetti and Finnish Fashion Week as well as explains what strategies are to be used in this research.

The theory gathered is mainly what exactly PR is and how to build strategy for an event. The author is additionally reviewing and referencing information and the theory gathered from different sources, giving an overall picture of PR and its strategies. The interview with the PR specialist was the most efficient way to gather the information needed and get deeper and more competent answers in order to come to a relevant conclusion.

2 PUBLIC RELATIONS

2.1 What is Public Relations?

To be able to plan an effective PR strategy it is needed to understand the concept of PR, what it aims for and what strategies are included.

Keeping the organisation's reputation amongst its publics is very important for companies to have. PR has a strategic role in managing the intangible side of the business in the process of building the relationships with customers and other stakeholders. (Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010, 390)

Fill (2009, 386-387) defines PR that it is all about the organisations' reputation. It is the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you. PR is defined as planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill.

PR is one of the most effective ways when it comes to marketing an event. According to the carried interview with the PR specialist the purpose of PR is to make the product to look good and get more customers. (Small 2014)

Theaker (2001, 77) points out that public relations reaches beyond the association family and attempts to identify those who may not be intimately aware of the event but have supportive potential. This is crucial when marketing an event.

The idea is to attract not only the possible stakeholders but also a lot of audience as well and using the right tools in PR, the Finnish Fashion week is able to market it and make it visible to as many people as possible.

Grunig and Hunt have highlighted the monologue – dialogue aspects of communication through PR. They have described the four models that have been used as a benchmark by academics. (Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010, 392)

Model Name	Type of communication	Model Characteristics
Press Agency/Publicity model	One - way	After researching audiences, uses persuasion and manipulation to influence the target audience
Public information model	One - way	Uses press releases and other one way communication techniques to disseminate organisational and brand information
One - way asymmetrical model	One - way	Without researching audiences, manipulates and persuades the target audience
Two - way symmetrical model	Two - way	Uses communication to negotiate with the target audience, resolve conflict and promote mutual understanding respect between the organisation and its audiences

Figure 1. The four models of public relations

Press agency and publicity model's purpose is propaganda and publicity uses the one way communication based on provider to receiver. Public information model's purpose is to spread more information and again it uses the one way type of communication. One way asymmetrical model means that the organisation doesn't change anyway but intends to manipulate and persuade audience's behaviour in the way the or-

organisation wants it to. Two - way symmetrical model's target, however, is to get mutual understanding between the sender and its audiences in a complete and accurate way. One -way communication means that the sender is initiating the messages and there is no communication between the audience and the sender. Whereas the two way type of communication allows the audience to communicate with the sender. (Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010, 392)

2.2 Objectives of Public Relations

The objectives of public relations are earning understanding and support as well as influence opinions and behaviours (Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010, 390). Public relations efforts are aimed at getting others to say organisation's cause, need, purpose, mission, and place in the community. Although achieving goodwill through Public relations requires patience, its affects can be long lasting. (Scott 2011, 8)

Public relations are directed towards different stakeholders in micro and macro environment. Micro environment is all the immediate stakeholders and factors that directly affect the company and macro environment is the broader environment which can apply to all organisations in an operating section. Both of these environments affect ultimately the corporate image. (Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010, 395)

Public Relations' aim is to build awareness and brand knowledge for the company. PR is an effective way to cover the local communities and reach specific groups. PR is usually more cost effective than advertising, even though PR and advertising must be planned together. When PR is done creatively, it can have an impact on the public half of the cost what advertising would. The company doesn't pay for media space or time but only for a staff to develop and circulate the stories and manage certain events. A good story for media can be worth a lot and that way the company has saved a significant amount of money. Also it said that consumers are influenced by a story in a magazine or newspaper rather than standard advertising. Nowadays the media gives consumers so much information and advertisement that more organizations realize how big of role public relations has and the potential to expand organizations marketing. (De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van De Bergh 2007, 291; Fill 2009, 386-387)

2.3 Challenges of Public Relations

According to De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van De Bergh (2007, 295) the challenge of PR is that there is a lack of control of the press coverage of news releases. The media might have other priorities and other sources so the story might be different from what the organisation wanted it to be. Organisations have full control when it comes to advertising but with PR, journalists are organisations gatekeepers so to speak. If the story doesn't have enough news value it might not be even published. Further the effectiveness is harder to measure. One way is to measure the media exposure but it doesn't really say anything about the long term effects of PR.

Good Public Relations is based on a PR plan that is having the same guidelines as any other communications plan. The target group has to be defined and the messages the organisation wants to send have to be determined. Further, the tools, channels and timing have to be planned. (De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van De Bergh 2007, 296)

2.4 Advantages of PR

PR is a powerful and cost-effective way of communication to get organisation's messages to its key audience. It is a very useful way of informing and persuading the target audience. People will not support a cause or a business if they do not understand its purpose or if they do not trust the people behind the brand.

According to Rositer & Bellman (2005, 385-388) with PR the organisation gets attention without negative impression that it might with advertising because PR enable organisations to get a good reputation through communication while advertisement makes strong impressions in the publics with unverified information. In addition, advertising and marketing campaign cost much more money compared to PR campaign.

Some organisations don't have big budgets to use for big advertisements or even have a department for marketing. In fact, PR activity is a well affordable solution for these organizations since it creates a positive impact, tangible, suitable cost, resonates in

transferring business brand to the public. PR also helps a company in human resources because if the company has a good reputation it is considered as a good employer and corporations that have public's support it can overcome its crisis easier as well.

PR is more creative than standard advertising. PR uses intermediaries, newspaper articles or promotion events with performance or entertainment activities packed with load of practical consumption information contain to get public recognition. Whereas there are tens of advertisements in one newspaper and billboards on the street and the organisation wouldn't get the attention they wanted because the advertisement didn't stand out from the other ones. (Scott, 2011, 39-40)

Below there is a list of the situations in which PR particularly brings effectiveness according to Scott (2011, 126)

- Launching new products
- Refreshing old products
- Improving reputation
- Enterprises have limited budget
- Enterprises face crisis

2.5 Tools of Public Relations

Several academic writers agree upon the fact that PR is a necessary tool for strategic management. Dahlen, Lange and Smith (2010, 113) state that it is important to have a strategy set to provide a realistic idea of what audiences have to be targeted and what strategies and objectives to implement.

According to Grunig (1992, 6) the three types of publics are active, passive or latent and organizations communicate with them proactively or reactively. When the organization does both; initiates and sends the communication, it might try to hide the origin of the sender to get the communication more neutral or wanting the communication to be perceived as coming from a more credible source to the target audience. This is called hybrid PR which doesn't focus on direct communications with an audience but changes its context.

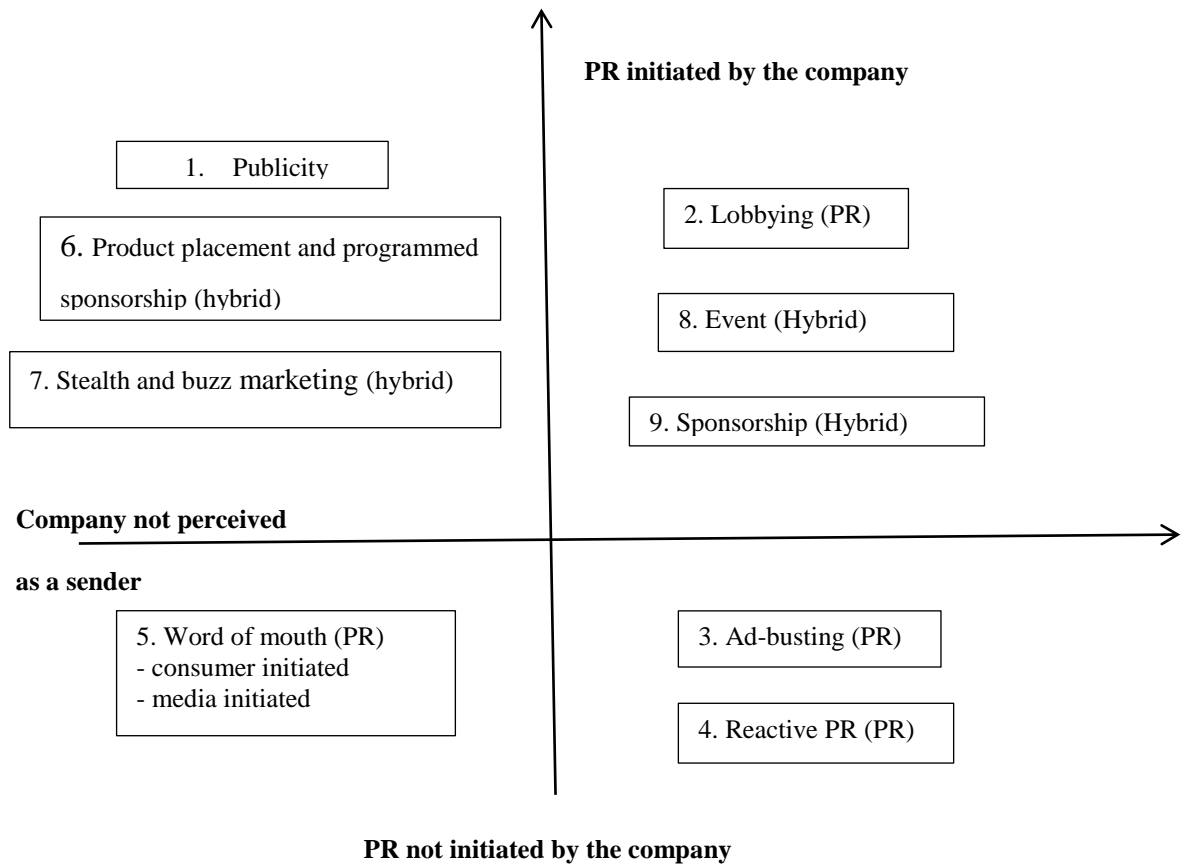


Figure 2. PR and hybrid PR strategies

One of the main issues in organizational management is that it has to achieve its overall strategic objectives. The goal in planning corporate identity is that it meets the future strategic objectives. Organizations practising a two way symmetric approach on communication management should adapt their corporate strategies according to publics' opinions identified through research. (Theaker 2001, 76)

Regardless of the type of organization, successful ones have a strategy that helps with the long-term direction and the extension of the operation. Strategy making involves a great deal of information, analysis and decision making and strategy selection is done by an alliance that has most power in the company.

Public Relations helps collecting and interpret information from the social environment so that strategic decisions can be made and it also helps with the communication of the strategic vision. (Lange, Dahlen & Smith 2010, 37)

2.5.1 Publicity

Publicity is a form of marketing communications that is initiated by the company but the target is reached by another medium. For instance, publicity can generate word of mouth and media discussions where the company has initiated it. For instance newspapers, social media and blogs are part of publicity, the message is initiated by the company but the medium reaches the target audience, the message is part of medium's content and has life of its own. There are five main reasons why organization would use publicity and they are increasing publicity space, low costs, demand, objectivity of message and integrated marketing communications. (Dahlen, Lange and Smith 2010, 403)

Increasing publicity space is meant if the competition is increased, it leads to fewer resources available to produce material and the demand for publicity space is higher. Low costs means that the publicity medium should be something that is cost effective for the company. By demand is meant when stakeholders may demand information directly from the company. Multiple sources that publicity could provide are important factors in expanding the information. The message is usually perceived more objective if it is sent by some other than the company itself and the publicized information has more credibility. Integrated marketing communications is if the communication is mixed with other components, it gives more coherence and cumulative impact. It is said that the effects in advertising are bigger when publicity used. (Dahlen, Lange and Smith 2010, 403)

2.5.2 Lobbying

Lobbying is similar to advertising; the message is sent by the company itself. Except in lobbying the ultimate goal is different, it is not focused on a certain product or mission; it is aiming at affecting the company's macro environment. That is why lobbying is often called environmental marketing or macro marketing. The three most common goals for lobbying are to increase efficiency, get more power in the markets and legitimacy. (Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010, 405)

2.5.3 Ad Busting

This form of PR is basically sabotaging campaigns by consumers. This is different from the negative word of mouth even though the company is not the initiator, it might be seen as the sender. Double personality brand image are negative which interfere with the actual brand. Social media and internet plays a big role in this since the opinion leaders use these routes to get their message through. Companies of course make this form of PR easy since all the symbols and signs are available to the consumers. And the message is more credible because of usage of the signs and symbols. An example of ad-busting is consumers putting stickers that say "may cause eating disorders" on billboards of lingerie models. (Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010, 407)

2.5.4 Reactive PR / Ambush marketing

These two are meaning the same thing but are used with a different name. Ambush marketing means that organisations try to derive the same values as sponsorships without actually being a sponsor. Also meaning that the organisation is trying to associate themselves with an event and even benefit from the confusion consumers may have. (Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010, 408)

2.5.5 Word of Mouth

According to Dahlen, Lange and Smith (2010, 408) consumers are able to spread negative or positive word of mouth either directly to one another or through social media. Being able to find and enable the opinion leaders can be very beneficial for the company since they gain a lot of attention from consumers.

Negative word of mouth is still as important as positive word of mouth marketing wise. It gives publicity space and more credibility since media reports are usually taken more seriously than advertising. The communications also can be integrated so that positive publicity may enhance the effects of advertising campaigns and negative may reduce the effects of advertising. Media also prefers negativity in some cases because it is proven that audience is more attentive to negative than positive information.

Dahlen, Lange and Smith (2010, 409) also state that attributions – who the audience blames to for the negative reports, and expectations – how the company reacts to the negative word of mouth and how well it matches with the audience's prior opinions, are the most critical to effect the negative word of mouth.

2.6 SPONSORSHIP

The thesis is going to take a closer look on sponsorship as well since the Finnish Fashion week wants to invite sponsors to co-operate and it has a few existing sponsors who advertise the event and help with overall event marketing. When interviewing the PR specialist, it was clear that sponsorships are crucial for a non-profit event.

2.6.1 What is sponsorship?

Sponsorship means supporting an event, activity or a person or organisation financially or through products and services. It is an exchange of advertising in order to fund an event or entity. (Mehndiratta 2009, 229)

According to Dahlen, Lange and Smith (2010, 418) sponsorships are all about building a long term relationship and the companies get a mutual value out of it. Sponsorships have the potential of reaching further and gaining a wider audience.

The sponsoring companies benefit from the event itself because the benefit that the sponsor gets is not limited to the actual event and their visitors. They gain extra advertising and publicity for sponsoring and that is why the sponsorships are usually perfect opportunities for advertising and promotions. The main focus on sponsorship is not only to make the brand visible but also to build its image. The sponsor is part of the event and in the audience's mind the sponsor is associated with the event. (Dahlen, Lange and Smith 2010, 417)

When it comes to sponsoring events the one that is being sponsored is present for a limited time and in that time the parties try to get as much publicity as possible. When the event is not occurring again, the event marketing is often considered as public relations, but if the event is organised continuously it is considered as a sponsorship. That way the event gets its image and that will also influence the organiser of the event. If the event and organisation have the same name, they can still be seen as an event and a sponsor. The event can be taken as a phenomenon in which the company wants to be part of (Vuokko 2002, 313-314.)

2.6.2 Sponsorship and non-profit event

Event sponsorship is part of event marketing and many events would not have been possible to organise if it were not for sponsorships. Sponsorship is a commercial endeavour and it takes a lot of time. Although the sponsors may provide the funding the event needs, they also need the events resources to meet their objectives (Goldblatt 2002, 268.)

According to Diamond and Diamond (1999, 287-293) it is really important to get the sponsor involved to the expenses of the whole event. Organizing a fashion event might be expensive and especially in this case the organisation has limited funds. If there are a lot of guests invited then the actual venue must be big as well. The staff and other operational elements included can be handled partly by sponsors.

Sponsorship might lead to an idea that it has something to do with charity but, in fact, it doesn't. The idea of the sponsorship is that both parties benefit from it and figure out all the forms of cooperation that can be done, leading to the so called win-win situation. The sponsor can, for instance, use its logo in the event's marketing or advertise itself in the event (Vallo & Häyrynen 2008, 74)

3. NON – PROFIT EVENT

The main objective of a trading business and event is to earn profit. They need profits to keep up their business as well as to be able to grow and make changes. On the other hand there are the other types of events which are called non-profit events which main objective is to provide services with discounted rates and not make profits. (Singla 2010, 118)

Singla (2010, 118) defines a non-profit event as an economic entity that provides services beneficial to the society meeting certain social, cultural, legal, recreational and professional purposes other than making a large amount of profit. The income is usually membership subscriptions, donations and grants or if the organisation is doing trading activities the profit is used for promoting the organisation's main objectives.

The main features of non-profit event are: they are formed with the objectives of promoting art, culture, literature, religion, sports, charity, educations or any other useful objective without aiming for any profit. Their purpose is to serve public without a cost or a discounted cost and they do not usually do trading services. Lastly, the main source of income is subscriptions, donations and grants and so on. (Singla 2010,118)

4. USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PR

Just over the past couple of years the role of social media in organizational marketing has become very important and, in fact, public relations experts were one of the first ones to embrace social media. Social media is an increasingly engaging communications medium in mostly because its ability to tailor its content to viewer. (Dahlen, Lange, Smith 2010, 459)

Social media has grown significantly since the last couple of years and has turned into a marketing and advertising powerhouse. People are using social media in their everyday life so it is essential for businesses to use social networking in marketing their brand to the customers. (Daily Herald 2012)

Since social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook, began allowing organizations to create profiles and become active members, organizations have started incorporating these strategies into their public relations programming. (PR Review)

Waters (2009) found that non - profit events use social media to streamline their management functions, interact with volunteers and donors, and educate others about their programs and services. Through interactions with stakeholders on Facebook and other social media applications, organisations seek to develop relationships with important publics.

To be able to use social media in the most effective way, the business needs to involve its network, creating interesting content and interacting with the customers. By promoting the organisation, it will raise awareness amongst people and enables to track and monitor the users. This is to find out the most effective ways to increase the social media network and capture the organisations market. (Newman 2011)

5. WHAT IS A PR STRATEGY?

Strategy means having a goal, choosing the actions how to achieve that goal and what resources to use with these actions. Strategy is a plan of action that the determined goal will be achieved with. (Dahlen, Lange & Smith 2010, 541) This thesis is concentrating in the action and how it is achieved.

According to Pollard (2012, 4) a PR strategy helps organizing PR activities and determine which are the best ways to communicate. A good PR strategy will help the business to use its stories to get the target audience's attention and increase its profile to build brand awareness.

The PR strategy should involve the business goals and objectives, meaning what the business want to achieve. PR helps you determine which sources to use to raise the awareness for the certain market. (Pollard 2013)

In PR strategy, it is important to have the SMART technique which stands for are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. When the organisation has clear goals it will have a purpose for its PR strategy and it can maximise the success of the PR strategy. (Pollard 2013) With specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely organisation can focus on what has to be done, what can be done and in what time. Specific means setting a goal describing what has to be done in detail. Measurable means the way to measure the outcome, achievable means that the organisation sets goals that are not too hard to attain. Realistic is that with the resources, time and competitive situation the goal is still achieved and timely means the timeframe how long it will take that goal to be achieved. (Dahlen, Lange and Smith 2010, 94). Below this SMART technique is implemented in target audience, key messages, tactics, timeframe and measuring the outcome.

5.1 Target audience

The target audience is the individuals, the groups and communities that have influence and decision making power over business' products or services. They are the ones business is trying to attract and sell to – they are the people the business wants to communicate with. (Pollard 2013)

The target audience is found by thinking who possibly are interested in hearing about the business, who are the key decision makers, who have an impact to the business' outcomes and who would take action or purchase the business' product. After the target audience has been identified, it is time to research about their behaviours such as how they consume media. By researching and defining the target audience the business communication can be tailored according to the target audience's behaviour and therefore the business can increase the effectiveness of its PR strategy. (Pollard 2013)

5.2 Key messages

Key messages are the main messages that the business wants to send to the target audience. They are an important part of a PR strategy because they can modify the business' content and communicate a unified message. The key messages can be included in the written and spoken communications to convey a specific message to the business' target audience. The best key messages are believable, easy to understand, distinctive, credible and drive the business' agenda. Who, what, when, why and how should be cleared in the key messages. (Pollard 2013)

5.3 Tactics

According to Pollard (2013) Tactics are the certain activities that make the PR objectives achievable. One example of tactics in raising awareness would be distributing media release. This would be sent for all the relevant publications and the target audience to secure an article about the event. Other tactical options may be email newslet-

ters, social media campaigns, blogs, public speaking or telling interesting stories about the business to journalists.

To start with the target audience should be researched more in depth. It is important to know what kind of publications the target audience reads, what kind of events and how much time is spent online by the target audience. This will help to determine what kind of tactics to use. (Pollard 2013)

5.4 Creating a time frame

In PR strategy it is important that each tactic is done by certain time. Creating an action plan for each month and details of the PR activities to be done, determining who will complete them. It should be stated when the activity is started as well as the deadline for the activity to be finished. A PR strategy with detailed time frames can help organising the workload, ensures accountability and makes sure that the tasks are completed. (Pollard 2013)

5.5 Measuring the outcome

It's important to measure the success of the PR strategy. The organisation can create its own measurement tools or set key performance indicators (KPIs) around what is wanted to be achieved. The time frame can also be one measurement; whether or not the goals were achieved in a certain time. By measuring the success can help discovering if the PR activities are working and if they are effective enough. It also helps finding the areas that need to be improved. When the organisation has a PR strategy to follow, it helps to plan every aspect of the communicating message and ultimately will help to maximise the success of the PR activities. (Pollard 2013)

There are three categories for measuring the outcome; Input, output and achievement indicators. Input indicators measure the efforts PR not the actual numbers. Input indicators may be for example the number of new stories, number of interviews, stores visited or brochures sent. Output indicators measure the PR activity on how much me-

dia coverage and publicity the event has got. For example how much press space the event got, the length and the tone of the stories and how many people read it. Finally the achievement indicator measures if the event met the interest of the key publics. Examples of these might be the share of the target audience that was reached, changes of awareness, changes of opinions, if the organisation's image is better than it was before the event and the extent where the behaviour has changed. (De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van De Bergh 2007, 308).

6. PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY FOR FINNISH FASHION WEEK

This part focuses on the PR strategy of Finnish Fashion Week; what exact PR strategies to use and in what time frame. The strategy is only approximate since the event can be postponed to the following year. The strategy needs to support Osuuskunta Innetti's marketing plan and get as many people interested as possible in cost effective way since it has limited funds but at the same time find the most effective ways to promote for the target market.

6.1 What strategies and tactics to use

According to Lea – Greenwood (2013, 57) fashion PR is all about promoting and placing the product in the media in the public domain such as magazines, TV, film and online. For companies that don't have campaign or budget, PR may be their only way to get the product or event in publicity.

When researching the best strategies, the conclusion was that the best ways to market the event would be social media and sponsorships from press, radio and fashion stores that may include make-up stores and shopping centres. The organisation should up Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram for the event as well as getting fashion bloggers involved. Further, the organisers should get press such as fashion magazines and local newspapers to write about the event and the event would have logos and the name of the magazine on show at the venues, webpages and social media. Make-up and accessory stores can get involved by using the make-up and accessories on the

shows and again having their name everywhere where the event is promoted. Getting radio and fashion magazines to sponsor the event would mean already huge publicity but adding social media and blogs will get even more people to get involved.

According to the PR specialist when it comes to the fashion industry it's a very competitive environment and even small organisations must stand out from the bigger ones and their bigger budgets. At the moment the upcoming fashion events within the next year are: Pre Helsinki, Elle fashion show, Gloria Fashion Weekend and Muotipäivät by Fashion unit. That is why social media marketing in this case is important. Further, using general publicity through editorial in the lead up focusing on designers and key public figures would be one strategy to use. As there is a very limited budget, the author and the PR specialist came up with some ideas what activities could be used to compensate with the budgetary constraint.

The customer segment mainly women aged between 18 to 40 and this age group is most likely to use Facebook, Twitter and other sources of social media. Also getting popular fashion bloggers get involved and offering them to come to the show will help the event to be seen all over Finland.

According to Scott (2011, 63) there are four different ways of using blogs: They are easy to monitor the market the company is targeting and what the consumers are saying about it. Secondly, the organisation can participate in conversations by commenting, the organisation can work with bloggers to write about the organisation and finally shaping conversations by creating own blog.

Creating an effective website for the event is important, so all the possible sponsors and stakeholders can access it. They can access the website any time of the day and it can be used for registration, let them know about news by updating it frequently and having all the contact information there. Putting up videos and active updating keeps the sponsor and co-workers up to date of the planning process.

To get target audience attention there can be promotions in the shopping centres couple of weeks before the actual event. Putting up an own page to Facebook and active promoting will help the event to be seen. Also an own Instagram page and creating competition can be made for more publicity. For example: Take a picture of your style

and put #finnishfashionweek and win free tickets to the main show and backstage would get people's interest.

This same competition can be going on in the radio channel that is co-operating. Radio NRJ and VOICE are one of the biggest ones in Finland at the moment. This also makes it possible to give radio interviews and tell about the event to the public. Another ideas that came up were a makeover, win a new style or win tickets to an after party.

Other strategies would be using press. According to Kotler and Keller (2012, 546) publicity and word of mouth are the least risky and most effective ways of PR and they are free as well. Sending press releases to the media or to the potential participants about the event make them more interested and it may be concluded that the press wants to know more and make a story out of the event. Broadcast would be appropriate - only if an event or a brand ambassador were doing something highly newsworthy.

According to the interview with the PR specialist word of mouth is the simplest and the most effective way of PR and is well within any agency's capacity to create. Doing good work and holding special events and the word will spread. Compared to the gushing stream of messages that might be caused by high budget advertising campaign, public relations is more like a drip method of irrigation. In addition, public relations can give your cause something advertising cannot: legitimacy. Creating a press release that can be distributed to the newspapers, bloggers and other mediums that can possibly spread the word and get people aware about the event will give the organisation free advertising.

6.2 Key messages of Finnish Fashion Week

Key messages for Finnish Fashion Weeks would be to make it clear to the target audience what the event is all about so that the target audience distinguishes from the earlier fashion events. Also enhancing the fact that it is first of its kind and fresh domestic designers are going to be the main thing. If the Finnish Fashion Week is able to have any celebrities in the event, it should in the messages as well.

Who: The new designers and anyone who will be presenting.

What: The first of its kind, new rising designers of Finland, new trends.

Why: To bring something new to the Finnish fashion scene and help designers to get their name out there.

When: Fall 2015 / 2016 and the exact date when it is determined, when are tickets available.

Where: Aleksanterinteatteri and other venues included.

How: To get more information the public can go the website or Facebook event.

6.3 Timeframe

The planning has already begun for Finnish Fashion Week but it is still uncertain whether it's 2015 or 2016. This still depends how the organising team get all together and if they need more time to attract more people and sponsors to get involved. Below in figure 3, the author gives an idea what can be done leading to September – October 2015. The work should be divided within the Osuuskunta Innetti's members, meaning the team is responsible for all the social media marketing, competitions and promotions.

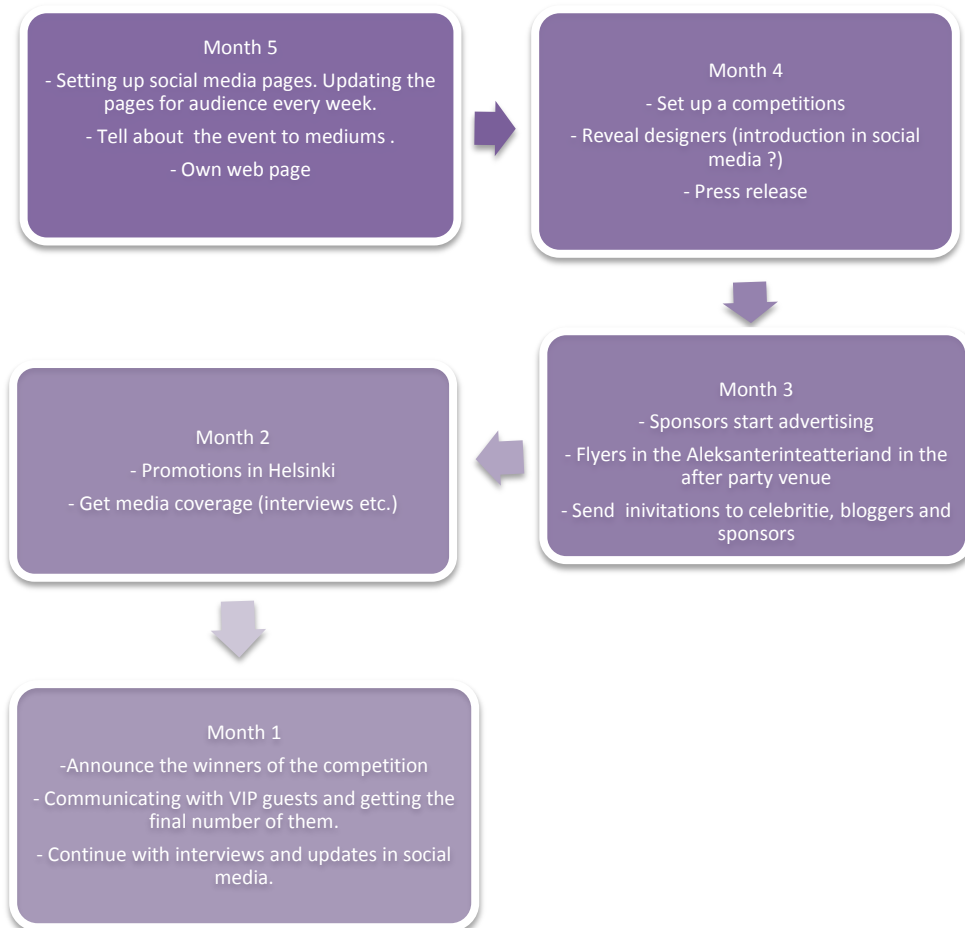


Figure 3: Timeframe for PR strategy

6.4 Measuring the outcome

For Finnish Fashion week the results are fairly easy to measure, the first is of course the number of tickets that have been sold for the fashion shows and the number of attended people in the main fashion shows. Another way of measuring would be, if the new designers did benefit from the event by getting orders or interested clients later on.

Instant results could be measured by the number of mentions in social media and reviews from newspaper. Also polls and questionnaires after the event are very helpful and help the organisation to see whether the event was successful.

6.5 Organisational analysis

Organisational analysis goes through the position of Finnish Fashion week as well who are potential competitors. In the next section the author has listed the SWOT analysis of the organisation listing its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

When it comes to Finnish Fashion Week and its market position it has good chances to differ from earlier events. By having the same “Fashion Week” name makes it appealing to the audience but having slightly different concept differs it from the competitors.

6.6 SWOT

The author is evaluating the strategic position of Finnish Fashion Week by creating a SWOT analysis. Below in figure 4 there are the internal factors; Strengths and weaknesses and the external factors; opportunities and threats of Finnish Fashion Week presented.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>STRENGTHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fashion Week is a known brand • Hasn't been in Finland before • Innetti Oy team's experience and knowledge about Fashion industry • Good connections • Good venue (Helsinki, Aleksanterinteatteri) • Sponsors • Prices may be low since organisation is not for profit 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>WEAKNESSES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small organising team • Uncertainty of how many sponsors will be involved and how much they are willing to contribute • Will have to choose the designers carefully and foresee what styles are going to be hits.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility to expand to other countries • Make it an annual event • Worldwide media exposure and coverage. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>THREATS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upcoming events • Similarity to other events • Negative image in press, due to similarity to other events.

Figure 4. SWOT analysis of the Finnish Fashion Week

Strengths:

Fashion week as a brand is known all over the world and it has quite a long history, so it is easy to bring it to Finland as well because the target market knows the concept. It is the first official Fashion Week that has been in Finland which makes it unique and gives competitive advantage.

The event is easy to get people's attention and get celebrities involved. The team has knowledge and experience in organising events and knowledge about fashion industry and how it all works. Also connections and relationships to different mediums make it easier to get publicity for the event. The venue, Aleksanterinteatteri, is making it possible to have pretentious fashion shows. Helsinki as a location is perfect as it is a big city and enables to create more as well as it is easy to access from all over Finland.

Weaknesses:

Finnish Fashion week is organised by a small team and the work has to be started well in advance in order to carry out all the jobs that need to be done. Since doing the event for non-profit, the organisation is dependent on sponsors and what they contribute and that fact determines a lot what can be done. Being dependent on the sponsor also determines whether it is possible to get any international names to come in to the event which would make people more interested as well.

What makes it more challenging is that the team is responsible of the designers who will showcase their lines and this has to be done carefully. They have to try not to exclude clothing lines and designers who might hit the trends for the next season and vice versa.

Opportunities:

The event has a possibility to expand marketing to the neighbour countries that don't have Fashion Week yet, such as Sweden, Estonia and Russia. Further, Finnish Fashion Week can be arranged annually if the first one goes well and the second time it would be already easier to get sponsor and people involved. Further, when it becomes an annual event, bigger names can be involved. This may lead to worldwide exposure and media coverage.

Threats:

There are similar events held couple of years ago for example NRJ Fashion awards and the concept was that it had a guest artist and the new designers from different universities were competing with each other. Other threats might be also upcoming events that are not published yet as well as people may confuse Finnish Fashion Week in other similar events.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the research was to prepare a PR strategy for a non-profit event, Finnish Fashion week 2015. The research concentrated on distinguishing what PR is, its advantages, goals and strategies. The aim of the thesis was to gain knowledge about PR and its strategies and based on that, implement a PR strategy for the Finnish fashion week.

Qualitative methods were used to be able to carry out a reliable outcome for the thesis. The main study questions were what different PR strategies there are and what strategies are the most effective ones for a non-profit event?

The main findings of this study was that it is really important for a company to have a PR plan and a strategy, especially in situations where the company doesn't have a big budget and the event is brand new. In organising fashion event it was obvious that publicity, social media and sponsorship were the main tactics to use in the PR strategy. These strategies also found out to be the most cost effective and with them the organization is able to reach the correct target audience in an effective way.

The competitive advantage of Finnish Fashion week is that the event is known all over the world but hasn't been organised in Finland yet. The organising team has an extensive background in organising events and knowledge from the fashion industry.

7.1 Necessity of the research

Finnish Fashion week will decide how to use this research for their benefit the best way. Now the organisation has research material and an outsider's view of what strategies to use for the event and the organisation can modify for their needs. In addition, the SWOT analysis help them see strengths that they have and can enhance them and what opportunities to take. It also shows the weaknesses and threats which they can turn into success by seeing them in advance.

All the information gathered in this thesis is providing a perspective supported by academic literature to help Finnish Fashion Week to make the best possible decisions regarding its PR strategy.

The research and writing this thesis as a project has taught for author how to prioritise and how to find reliable sources and information. The author also used critical thinking determining what information to use and what information is irrelevant for this particular study. The author gained more knowledge about PR throughout the process, as well as learnt to put a strategic plan together for an organisation. This all will help in the future when applying for jobs in that field.

7.2 Self-evaluation

After the subject was decided it was quite clear what was supposed to be done. There is a lot of academic research about PR so it was easy for the author to familiarise the concept of PR.

This thesis as an overall project that has taken quite a long time for the author to finish because of this and other issues such as moving to Australia and a full-time job. The author also found it challenging to keep in contact with Innetti Oy because of the time difference and being on the other side of the world. The lack of time definitely was the

main reason why this thesis took so long to execute and the author feels that the thesis is not as good as it could have been with more time.

The thesis is executed according to the thesis instructions set by Kymenlaakso University of Applied Sciences. The theory part has been covered well but when it came to putting theory and practise together, the author found it challenging. In addition, the theory was modified several times because the author wanted more depth to the research but didn't want attach irrelevant information to the research.

The thesis in general is explaining what PR is and presenting its strategies. Also the study shows what could strategies could be used for Finnish Fashion Week. The company analysis could have been covered better. However, in general, the author feels that the thesis includes important information that Finnish Fashion Week and other non-profit organisations can benefit from in future. This thesis also included the SWOT analysis which can help Innetti Oy gain competitive advantage.

The qualitative research was done with one-on-one interview with the head of the organisation, Susanna Hillenbrand, when the author was in Finland and later on via e-mail. The second interview regarding PR and theory was done with PR agency in Australia. The interviews helped the author to understand the organisation better as well as the PR agency gave a broader view on the theoretical part. Both the PR agency and the organisation has an extensive knowledge in their own fields, assures that the information in this thesis is valid and trustworthy. The thesis answers the research questions that were presented as well as the concept of PR explained, which was a base for a realistic and actionable PR strategy.

Author's time management, planning, research writing skills as well as decision making have been tested during this project. Planning and decision making have been done well but for example time management could have been better in the author's own point of view. Nevertheless, the author feels that this has been a valuable learning experience and the author can benefit from this in the future.

7.3 Recommendations for future research

Recommendations for future research would be to examine the efficiency of the PR from the customers' perspective before and after the PR strategy is implemented. Other interesting issues that are relevant to this study would be examining how different PR campaigns affect people and how customers' perspectives differ from the actual image the company wants to achieve. Furthermore, how well the company would overcome the crisis with the help of PR and how PR is done in different countries, if there are significant differences in how PR is implemented would be interesting for further research.

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Appendix 1

PR and non-profit organisation

1. *How do you start building the PR strategy for a non-profit organization?*
2. *What are the main differences in PR between non-profit organization and for profit organizations?*
3. *What are the most important things to consider when building a strategy for non-profit organization? Any ethical issues?*
4. *What are the most effective ways of PR strategy (word-of-mouth, lobbying, ad busting, ambush marketing etc.) for a non-profit organization in your experience?*
5. *What kind of media would you use to create publicity for a non-profit organization in fashion industry?*
6. *What news values would you focus on?*
7. *In your experience what is the most effective way to promote a non-profit fashion event?*

Public Relations in general

8. *The benefits of using PR?*
9. *Can you get out of negative reputation with the help of PR? How?*
10. *How do you measure results in using PR?*
11. *Which research techniques do you use to find out what your target publics think of your organisation?*

12. What are the challenges of working in public relations?

13. Should all campaigns be carried out from an integrated marketing communications viewpoint? What challenges does this present?

16. What are the effects of new technologies and social media channels on consumer PR?

17. PR can only give you the reputation you deserve. Do you agree?