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Environmental campaign construction and symbolism: in the case of WWF's campaign "Earth Hour".

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Introduction

WWF Russia is an international non-governmental organization, aimed to attract people's attentions to environmental issues. Much of its work focuses on forests, seas, endangered species, climate, oil and gas, reserves, legislation, education, and sustainability. The organization has 10 offices within the country with a head office in Moscow, which coordinates regional offices, recruits new supporters, works with the public, and provides information in regards to the environment and its activities. As they define their main objective: it is to save the earth's biological diversity as well as promoting actions in order to reduce pollution and natural resources depletion. WWF Russia is focused on 16 critical ecological regions all over the country, such as, the Arctic, the Far East, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Barents Sea, Kamchatka, Yakutia, and so on, which are the most important for biodiversity conservation, while the local urban campaigns are not common.

The first global campaign for WWF Russia, which has been officially carried out in Moscow and other big *cities* of Russia, was the Earth Hour. By the symbolic action - to turn off the light, WWF assumed that this is how everyone could show their concern about climate change and «vote» for Earth. Earth Hour was a symbol for a call of action to conserve environment and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, 87% of the people in Russia heard about climate change and global warming prior to the Earth Hour; however only 50% of them think that its effect is negative (Fund "Public Opinion" 2008).

At the evaluation meeting (and also as it was presented to the public) the Development Director called the Earth Hour the most successful campaign on climate change so far: the Earth Hour managed to reach those people, which they could not reach before, more than one million people participated in the campaign, 1400 publications and a record number of reports have been monitored. It was also the first time for WWF Russia to be on all television channels for that period.

My interest was driven by the story of success that the campaign made for the NGO. Thus, I became interested in what factors could determine this type of success and what mechanisms could broadly attract mass public's attention. In addition, I was curious what the actual message of the Earth Hour was, since I had heard the broad critical discussion about it. Apart from the campaign, as a Russian citizen, I was interested to know how NGOs are carrying out their projects within my country and what the differences are in contrast to developed countries with respect to communicating the campaigns.

Aim and Research Questions

In the given paper my general aim is to describe, understand, analyze and evaluate the Earth Hour campaign launched by WWF as well as the communication process behind the campaign; also, I want to stress the influence of the symbols, which were broadly used and question the campaign's aim.

My preunderstanding led me to the following questions:

- How the overall communication strategy has been formulated;
- What are the objectives of the campaign and how they have been elaborated?
- What assumptions do they claim?
- What channels have been used and why?
- What tools have been used – what do they hope for?
- What was crucial in choosing tools and channels?
- What did they want the target audience to know or not to know?
- What did they want the target audience to do – what action did they want as a result?
- How the monitoring had been done

- What were the expectations and what results have been achieved according to the expectations, and what is success for the NGO?
- What barriers or potential conflicts have been faced?
- As a global campaign conducted in all over the world – what was different and had to be adjusted to the local context?

Methods

During the planning stage, once the aim and research questions had been identified I chose the interviews and observation as the methods of gathering qualitative data.

An interview is a social situation in which two persons that are typically more or less unfamiliar to each other meet for a short period of time (Alvesson 2003) as well as interviews are speech-events and they are contextual. In the beginning, being in the office due to practicalities, I had to make appointments with the workers I wanted to interview through my supervisor. However, after some time, there was no more difference for me between an appointed interview and just casual conversation, since I had an opportunity to ask questions whenever I met people in the office or encountered a new assignment. Thus, I guess most of the people I was interviewing (or talking to), did not feel that they have been interviewed.

I was aware that different contexts around each interview situation could lead to varied responses from the interviewees because of a number of circumstances: the content of the questions, the scene or physical location (all the interviews have been held in the office) or even the psychological state of the respondent at the time of the interview. Therefore, other use of the questions, other gestures as responses of what was being said could result in a change in interview accounts. Also, the research could be constrained by my own preunderstanding and preferred language, as being subjective interpretation of the data.

While most of the time open-ended interviews were used, in some cases where I felt necessary to use semi-structured interviews with already prepared questions with a strong connection to the research question and aim, but I was not obliged to follow exactly the wording of the questions and was open in case if the interviewee felt something was of relevance and needed expanding with respect to the issue.

Since I passively participated in the meetings, the other method used was observation. The advantage of the method could be that I did not intervene in the process but was investigating the object of my study, the way how people were communicating – the interview did not depend on me, which allowed me to be more objective. However, as being strongly connected to my own observation, the interpretation could be affected by my preunderstanding and the perception of the observed phenomena.

Theoretical framework

I believe, that following theoretical framework, which I chose for my analysis and interpretation, could serve as a basis for general understanding of the empirical data and was fitting due to numerous reasons. The symbolic interactionism was applicable since the whole campaign was founded upon a symbolic concept of turning off the light as well as other means used in the campaign. Also, I used Cox and Nitsch's theory to evaluate the main procedures in designing an environmental advocacy campaign based on my observations since it established well-grounded criteria for my assessment of the given campaign. This theoretical background was my own pre-requisite prior to the investigation of the given case study.

Meaning of the symbols

The symbolic interactionist perspective takes the use of symbols, especially words, the central concept of the whole perspective. Also, symbolic interactionism claims, that although objects may exist in physical form, human beings see objects only through a perspective and, in turn, human beings learn about and come to understand their environment through interaction with others. This is why objects are called social objects by symbolic interactionism, while the symbols are in fact social objects: they are socially established and understood. Symbols are representations used only because people create them to be and the meaning is not physical, but abstract. The one who uses symbols knows what they mean; the one who receives them understands what they stand for, in other words, symbols are meaningful, they are not simply responses, but have meaning to those who use them.

Furthermore, symbols are social objects that are used to represent, whatever people agree they should represent. And in turn, representation is what we use to communicate to other people. Symbols allow to share understanding, to tell others what we think, what we know and what we intend. It is not only words and objects that are symbols, but also the acts: what we do is meant to represent and communicate to the others.

A definition of Environmental Communication and what is an Environmental Advocacy Campaign

Cox offers the definition of EC as the pragmatic and constitutive vehicle for our understanding of the environment; it is symbolic medium that we use in constructing environmental problems and human communication is symbolic action. Symbolic action itself is the property of our language and other acts (art, photographs, street protests, scientific reports etc) to do something as well as literally to say something. It's not simply the transmission of information from a sender to a receiver. Communication actively shapes our understanding when we see natural world through symbols, such as, words, images, or narratives, they create meaning, influence and orient us to a wider world. As a kind of symbolic action, EC has two different functions.

First, it is pragmatic since EC's aim can be to inform, warn, persuade, and mobilize as well as it can be a part of environmental problem-solving. For example, in case of the Earth Hour: NGO provides information (educates) about the aspects of climate change, calling to an action to participate and express a concern, while one of the objectives is to persuade the governmental organs – collectively, it proves the pragmatic function of EC.

Also, EC is constitutive. Where do people get their knowledge of the natural environment? They watch TV and read newspapers, where journalists report on environmental issues, natural disasters and the campaigns of environmentalists. But not only do people live in the natural environment, they also live within social representations of the natural environment. Cox says that EC in terms of language and other symbols also helps us to constitute, or compose, representations of nature and environmental problems. And when we communicate publicly with others, we share these understandings and invite reactions to our views.

As described by Cox, there are four features shared by communication campaigns:

- A campaign is purposeful;
- A campaign is aimed at a large audience;
- A campaign has a more or less specifically defined time limit;
- A campaign involves an organized set of communication activities in terms of message production and distribution.

However, what distinguishes environmental advocacy campaign from the other issue campaign is that, they are usually (although, not necessarily) waged by noninstitutional sources (e.g. NGO, concerned individuals etc). Also, if most public relations campaigns seek to change individuals' attitudes and/or behaviors, then most environmental campaigns seek to change certain external conditions, for example, the policy or practice of a governmental or corporate body. Even

though, if at the same time a campaign may seek to influence individual behavior (encouraging the use of public transportations or to conserve electricity in the households), such attempts are often seen as steps toward systemic change in society's treatment of the environment. For example, if more people use bicycles, it may create political support for more funding for bike paths building.

In addition, a campaign itself may employ different forms of advocacy, such as education, direct action and so on. The idea is that a campaign relies on multiple forms of advocacy as part of strategic and time-limited course of action for a specific purpose.

Nitsch defines EC as a planned activity, the purpose of which is to contribute to an improvement in resource conservation and environmentally sensitive practices within society. For the planning of the communication program Nitsch includes the stages, which are important to consider in order achieving that purpose. The following stages are:

1. *Target group analysis* deals with the question of who we should address. How does the environmental problem affect them? What are the actors and stakeholders that are involved? How willing are they to act? Which decision makers have the ability to respond?
2. *Identification of objectives and content.* What exactly do you want to accomplish?
3. *Choice of media and methods.* These choices should be made with due consideration of the target group, of their circumstances and the character of the environmental problem being addressed.
4. *Implementation* refers to the combination of techniques and skill that are integral to communication work. What will persuade the decision makers to act on the objectives?
5. *Analysis of results* includes questions, such as, to what extent have we achieved the objectives we set, how has the target group's understanding of the issue changed, how much has this process cost?
6. *Evaluation*, that applies to the whole process and to each stage.
7. *Dealing with the institutional framework.* It is important to be aware of this structures and how they affect the working process. Situational and institutional as well as social and psychological factors are important details to take into consideration when planning environmental communication.

Nitsch emphasizes that the overall planning should be flexible activity with both forward and backward movements, and all the stages are interconnected, where one idea can lead to a new idea, which in turn leads to a review of earlier ideas. However, the author states that the models are only proposed to serve as a mental tool to assure that essential aspects are included. Nitsch calls the practice of communication an art, which demands more than knowing about models.

Empirical discussion and interpretation

Earth Hour is a global campaign and symbolic action organized by WWF and was carried out on the last Saturday of March (28th of March 2009), asking households and businesses to turn off their non-essential lights and other electrical appliances for one hour in order to raise awareness towards the need to take action on climate change. Globally, the campaign was *aimed* to:

- Attract the widest possible attention of the entire world community to the problem of global climate change by turning off the light on a specific date.
- Encourage people around the world to save energy and other natural resources. It seems that, as planned, Earth Hour was supposed to show that everyone, including companies and governments, can contribute to fighting climate change and take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (the main cause of the current climate change). Through this act people would be

aware of the link between climate change and the wasteful consumption of electricity and will be more responsible consumers of the resources. Earth Hour was aimed to be an incentive to save energy every day.

- To sign post-Kyoto Protocol in Copenhagen in December 2009. According to WWF, Earth Hour could enable society to loudly declare that the public follows the progress of negotiations and calls from politicians signing an international agreement in December 2009 in Copenhagen at the UN Conference. The agreement would replace the Kyoto protocol and determine the actions of all countries to fight climate change at least until 2020. Earth Hour 2009 was seeking to reach 1 billion people in over 1000 cities: it is 1 / 6 of the world population - a figure, which the world leaders would not be able to ignore.

In addition, WWF mentioned that electricity conservation was not the primary purpose of the campaign.

Based on Cox's definition of EC, I interpret the first aim to be a specific objective, which is symbolic, concrete, measurable and time-limited action. While the latter ones are the long-term goals. In reaching these goals, the campaign is seeking to change the external conditions (the policy of the governmental and corporate bodies). Although, at the same time, the campaign can influence attitude and/or behavior of the individuals, but this action serves as a step toward a systemic change, for example, after the Earth Hour campaign in Australia the government initiated building bike paths. However, to the general public the first objective was presented as a primary message. In fact, WWF positions themselves as non-party political in its policy, and Earth Hour messaging should have been non-political in nature, however, in the 2009 campaign they were alerting supporters that when they decided to participate in Earth Hour they were effectively supporting government action on climate change in the lead up to the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference scheduled for December 2009. Thus, according to the WWF communicator, this message was carried out in a subtle manner and used only when appropriate so as not to lose a potential mass audience.

Communication Strategy construction:

Initially, in elaborating the campaign WWF Russia was using the basic guide designed by WWF Australia, which was the country where the Earth Hour was launched for the first time in 2007.

Appointment the Project Leaders to initiate the campaign

The first stage in delivering Earth Hour was to identify a Project Leader, with project management skills, who could drive the campaign from its early stages. And the first task of the Project Leader was to outline a basic plan for Earth Hour in the country and the city (Moscow, in particular). Thus, two responsible coordinators were appointed (the press secretary and the coordinator working with social advertising). In fact, in WWF Moscow there are no officially appointed "communicators". However, there is an Information Service, which is basically working with the environmental communication. The workers of the Information Service mainly have the educational and professional background of journalists and PR managers.

Connecting with the Earth Hour Global Team and Learning Process

Within global WWF organization there was formed the Earth Hour Global Team (the communicators and marketing/brand coordinators who had been working with the campaign in the other countries), which the Project Leaders had to make contact with. From the very

beginning, the network was used for the regular information sharing, so they had an opportunity to share ideas and use it as a source of knowledge throughout the entire period of the campaign.

The Earth Hour Global Network was the campaign's key internal communications tool. It hosted information such as latest news, up-to-date statistics on cities, icons and ambassadors supporting the Earth Hour 09 campaign, and reports from 2007 and 2008 that may be used to assist in organizing the current Earth Hour campaign. Each Earth Hour country was provided with a page on the internal Network, which they were required to update by every Friday with information in regards to their progress.

Further, the Earth Hour Global Team provided the WWF Moscow office with:

- Business Plan for Earth Hour 2009 for the project at a global level
- Suite of tools that formed part of the campaign at the local level, including:
 1. The Earth Hour website: web-site www.wwf.ru/60 was utilized as a main source of information for the public, supporters, media and so on. The people who decided to participate had an opportunity to register on the web-site, and in turn, that was used for monitoring. Compared to the other countries, WWF Russia was the only one who did not use www.earthhour.org as a main website due to the language barrier it could create for the Russian people.
 2. The own country page on the international website
 3. Global PR/media plan
 4. Logos and brand guidelines
 5. Sponsorship models document
 6. List of potential global corporate supporters (that could be leveraged locally)
 7. Earth Hour Measurement Pack outlining ways to measure/report success
 8. Set of Global Communication/Marketing/PR Tools and Templates that can be used locally
 9. Basic summary on Earth Hour to date including statistics.

That was done to ensure that the communications (internal and external) would be “on brand”, since “presenting WWF brand correctly is crucial in a sense of being consistent with the logo, typefaces, slogan, colors, and “on-brand” with the key messages and the way they used words and images on all applications. All this combined to communicate the sort of organization they are – active, passionate, solutions oriented” (WWF Communication Strategy Template).

This internal collaboration within the global NGO was about learning, making decisions and acting together. Using Wenger's concept, the Earth Hour Global Team can be called a “community of practice,” which is “a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger 1991). Wegner emphasizes that “information by itself is meaningless. Information only takes meaning in the context of the social practices of the communities that give it cultural life. Learning is seen as an evolving form of membership, occurring naturally as the individual engages in the practices and activities of the community—which becomes the living repository of knowledge.” Wegner's concept illustrates how social interactions contribute to individual learning.

Even though, in this case study the Global Team was interacting online, since the members of Team could not meet physically, it meets all the prerequisites for the community of practice, including joint enterprise that brings members together (global WWF network), mutual engagement that binds members into a social entity (the common campaign) and a shared repertoire (the general plan and suite of the tools used). Thus, the Global Team used different kinds of knowledge and experiences to be able to solve the encountered issues by communicating, sharing reflections and experimental actions.

The Earth Hour scope identification in the country

Choosing the cities:

20 cities of Russia participated in the campaign, while Moscow was chosen as the “Earth Hour Lead City”, since the WWF head office is situated in the capital; in addition as I was told they could show other cities in the country how the campaign could be carried out, or to be an example for imitation. The choice of the cities was mainly based on the presence of the regional WWF offices or where they had active supporters. Being the Lead City, head office in Moscow was communicating with the regional offices providing all the guidelines and tools but not controlling them: all regional offices were working independently.

According to the interviewed staff members they faced some other issues in a relation to the campaign that had to be considered when choosing an Earth Hour city:

- The city’s government/mayor/municipal authority needed to be supportive or if access was granted to the Earth Hour Team to key decision-makers within the city’s government. In Saint-Petersburg this factor created an obstacle and, as a result, the campaign failed, two representatives from an NGO-partner were responsible for the campaign and they did not manage neither to persuade the Administration of the city nor reach the Department of the Natural Resources.
- There are landmarks/iconic buildings or areas which can provide a visual/symbolic representation of Earth Hour’s success in Moscow: e.g. the light of all iconic building in Moscow city was turned off, such as, City Hall, Moscow State University and others.
- If there are other high-profile business or community leaders in the city, who are likely to be supportive: for example, in Saint-Petersburg the campaign was carried out in the companies, such as IKEA, home appliances stores and others.
- If a Project Manager or the Earth Hour Team can be based in the city: that was an important consideration as many face-to-face meetings with business and government were required in order to increase collaboration accounts.

Outline for success

During the planning stage, the WWF established objectives or indicators for success of the campaign. It included:

- Quantitative factor, such as an amount of the people registered on the web-site. The initial goal was to reach 100.000 registrations and that would be perceived as successful implementation;
- Administration participation and approval of the campaign (including the Mayor and Departments of the Government);
- Turning-off the light in iconic buildings and landmarks like bridges of the city as many as possible;
- Key Ambassadors getting behind the campaign;
- Advertising/promotion/PR appearing in as many places as possible.

For success outline an NGO chose specific objectives, which are concrete, time-limited and easy to measure in a short-term period, right away the campaign will be finished; while the long-term goal that was seeking to change the Kyoto protocol in Copenhagen in December 2009 was not included.

Reaching Government and city officials

Obtaining commitment and support from government and city officials before commencing the campaign was essential to securing the confidence of the broader community and the ultimate success of Earth Hour.

Approaches used:

High-level briefing with Department officials and Mayor to discuss security and safety concerns, and ensure the support/involvement of:

- Police, Fire Brigade, Ambulance and other emergency services
- Key Government Departments and Authorities (those, who responsible for roads, traffic, city bridges and electricity)
- Leading businesses already working with the Council on energy efficiencies

The WWF coordinator mentioned that the Administrative stage was the only one barrier faced by WWF Russia. As one of the first steps during the planning process in August 2008 the official letter was sent to the Mayor of the City and to the Department responsible for energy efficiency calling for approval of the campaign. Besides the official letters, the NGO was trying to reach government officials by involving their supporters-politicians at the different levels. The answer was not received until February 2009, which caused a stressful situation for project leaders and a speed-up of further actions. According to WWF communicator, at this stage, it was hard to explain the symbolism of action: the Earth Hour did not bring any saving in terms of economic indicators or electricity conservation.

When the Mayor of Moscow was reached, at first, the WWF got the approval to carry out the campaign, but later, he decided to turn off the symbolic closer of the Moscow State University, at his speech he declared that Moscow joins the global mass action Earth Hour together with more than a billion people in order to show our concern for the environment. Although, according to WWF coordinators, it was in fact a great difficulty for them to reach the Mayor, and to attract his attention to the issue. I assume that based on how the WWF workers were talking about the governmental organs, their attitude toward them is mostly skeptical as the communicator said that they are “absolutely inactive towards environmental issues in the country and have to be pushed all the time.”

Thus, for the NGO there are two different types of audience: the primary audience, which is the decision makers who have the authority to act or implement the objectives of the campaign, and secondary audiences, which are the various segments of the public, opinion leaders (those, whose statements often are influential with the media and members of the primary audience) and the media whose support is useful in holding decision makers accountable.

Building an alliance of partners and supporters to deliver the campaign

Project partners could help to deliver Earth Hour by providing:

- access to audience (community/business) to encourage wider engagement of Earth Hour
- access to key municipal/government authorities
- access to key business leaders and suppliers
- financial and in-kind resource, support, guidance and expertise

Mainly the partner’s identification was based on the project needs. The questions that had been take into account by the WWF when identifying and approaching potential core project partners:

- What are the current gaps in funding, skills, resource, access to audience etc?
- Are there current WWF partners/ corporate supporters who could be a core partner?
- Who can help the Earth Hour Team get to the right people?
- What kind of green credentials/reputation do the potential partners have?

By collaborating with the partners, the campaign was seeking to create broader support for their objectives. Also, for the campaign, partners are a kind of secondary audience, whose support is useful in holding decision makers accountable as well as they open an access in reaching general public.

The skill-set required for Earth Hour Team

Once they had secured project partners, project supporters and identified what is required to deliver Earth Hour in the city, WWF identified the skills the Earth Hour Team needed, since

further actions, where they defined how to reach the target audience, depended heavily on the skill-set they had at hand. While Nitsch calls the implementation of the environmental campaigns an art, WWF identified following skill-set, required for the successful implementation:

- Project management
- Online resources
- Marketing and promotion
- PR and media relations
- Fundraising
- Events
- Government relations
- Corporate relations
- Community group relations
- Administration and finance

Commencing the campaign: reaching the general public

The tools and strategies to promote Earth Hour and engage general public mainly depended on: budget, what worked in the given city, and access to space/channels (e.g. ad space).

Tools for reaching the general public included:

- Launch
- Website pages: in addition to the general information, WWF were suggesting their own recommendations and creative advices how to spend time during Earth Hour. They collaborated with the Network of Astrologers, who made the map of the stars on 28th of March, so people could look at starry sky while the lights were off. Also, in collaboration with the restaurant "In the darkness", WWF recommended to spend the evening in their dark room with candles. The webpage was used as a main tool for providing and updating information as well as a list of the partners committed to the campaign was published on web.
- Email bulletins
- Advertising: cinema commercial, radio commercial, print commercial (newspapers, magazines), and outdoor commercial (billboards), which were published for free by the partners. A basic Australian commercial was used, which was translated from English into Russian and also included commercials with endorsing celebrities.
- Ambassadors: the welcoming letters were sent to twelve embassies in Moscow, nine of them answered positively, in particular, WWF was collaborating with Danish embassy, since, according to the PR manager it was advantageous for the both sides: WWF got the additional funding and support, while the embassy of Denmark, which is typically not too well known to most people, could raise their popularity. In addition, the ambassador of Denmark conducted the educational meeting about Earth Hour in Moscow University of International Relations.
- Newspaper and online coverage
- Printed promotions (posters, postcards, stickers): were spread for free by supporters and volunteers and the materials could be downloaded from the website
- Facebook WWF groups/events with the constantly updated information and news: in addition, the Facebook group created an opportunity for people to talk to each other, where individuals who already supported the event could motivate those, who were "on the fence" on the issue, and consequently, creating one more independent tool of persuasion.
- School program and Competitions: WWF elaborated on a lot of activities: for pupils in schools and for GEO magazine readers they suggested to conduct contests, such as, "what to do in the darkness", contest of drawings and so on. As an incentive and prize, the winners could get the T-shirt with the Earth Hour symbol. Also, those people who shared the information about the Earth Hour and involved a lot of other people received the T-shirt as well. Thus, by active involvement people were more likely to see themselves committed to the activity.

- Community/sporting organizations program: fitness-centers, yoga centers and beauty saloons (partners of the event) offered their own activities for Earth Hour, e.g. exercises and procedures by candlelight.
- Celebrities endorsement: The Earth Hour was the first time when WWF managed to attract a large number of celebrities, even those who were unreachable before, such as, football players, Olympic champions, TV celebrities, opera singers and many others. All of these figures have idol-like and trust-worthy reputations among Russian people. Collectively they could attract the interests of different kinds of people of various age groups and with diverse interests. Thus, once celebrity endorsement was in place, their fan's attention was practically guaranteed as well. Moreover, since "people change their attitudes to agree with the people they like" (Sears et al, 1985), then anything that increases liking also ought to increase attitude change, for example, those who are seen as physically attractive could be also more persuasive communicators. Similarly, when a famous Russian soccer player represented the campaign's objectives, people were strongly influenced in their attitude by his opinion according to reviews on the Internet. In addition, expertness is valuable quality, which opinion leaders should possess. One of active supporters of the campaign was a renowned biologist and TV host, who could be seen as expert and credible source of information. In general, celebrities' involvement served as an active demonstration of support for the campaign's objective by key groups.

They did not establish specific goals for covering the campaign in the media sector. Although, as project partners, they used a broad variety of channels, such as, newspapers, magazines, electronic media, radio, TV etc: in total, about 120 channels aimed to attract as many different kinds of people as possible, as the target group was everyone.

Cox claims that the public audience differs in 3 types: the campaign's base (its core supporters, who could be mobilized easily to some extent), the opponents and persuadables. More importantly, it is persuadables, who are the main focus of a campaign's communication because they often make the difference in the outcome of the campaign, since they are members of the public who are undecided but potentially sympathetic to a campaign's objective.

The campaign triggered a lot of rhetorical resources – the subsequent media coverage and public attraction along with outrage: there were a few instances, when the campaign was broadly criticized (by opponents I presume), in particular, on Internet blogs, but eventually this negative feedback resulted in the recruitment of more supporters. The campaign did not attempt to persuade its opponents, as they are committed already to their own objectives. Coercion was not used, and the commitment was freely volunteered. However, according to Cox, persuadables often became an important target in mobilizing support and it seems that those, who were reading the opponents' critique, were persuadables.

Generally, in reaching general public, the campaign was aimed to mobilize a group's base and persuadables, which in turn attracts the attention of the news media and therefore provides opportunities to influence the primary audience of decision makers.

Commencing the campaign: reaching the business sector

The tools and strategies included:

- First, as a tool to engage and reach business for Earth Hour, the WWF used symbolic white glass bottles with a letter inside of it and a candle, calling to join the campaign
- As followed it was in direct contact with executive officers
- Face-to-face meetings
- Direct phone calls
- Emails
- Downloadable kits/resources for businesses (copies of ads, suggested messages to staff, promotional buttons and banners etc)

- List of businesses signed up on website: so all of them committed to participate publicly
- Advertisements in newspaper listing businesses signed up
- Businesses promoting Earth Hour through their own ads, channels etc
- Employee promotions: as there are people behind any business company, a promotion within an organization could be become an additional attention getter since their employees in turn could spread the message further down to their families and become participants themselves.
- The tools, used for reaching the general public, worked for businesses as well.

The information about the campaign was available in banks, hotels, restaurants, supermarkets and stores, fitness-centers, beauty saloons and so on. The choice of channels was based on credibility, trustworthiness, accountability of the partners and, preferably, environmentally friendly activity and reputation.

Among others, the business partners for Earth Hour became appliance store chains, Coca-Cola, construction companies, Canon, Airline-business Companies and many others. In my opinion, the participation of business companies can serve as a powerful channel in delivering a message and, moreover, their employees serve as the target audience as well. But what does the environmental campaign add to the business sector, whose primary goal is basically selling goods? For my perspective it is green label endorsement.

Having a label of support for environmental campaigns imprints an environmentally friendly image in people's minds with respect to the given company, which is closely related to green consumerism and encourages the belief that by buying products from companies with an environmentally friendly reputation, consumers can do their part too to protect the planet, which is an arguable issue in itself.

Theoretically, it seems to me that "true" good consumerism could be an excellent way of managing environmental problems. For instance, by buying products with green or eco-labels, people can boycott other companies, which in turn will make those companies readjust their strategies and conform towards a more environmentally friendly production strategy. But what if some businesses appear green, while often actively opposing environmental protection? Cox claims, that green marketing is used for three purposes: product promotion (sales), image enhancement and image repair, what in turn allows companies to appear greener than they are and simultaneously encouraging consumerism while establishing a new market. All products no matter how "green" they appear to seem, still cause some degree of pollution and use a certain amount of resources and energy. The campaign was aimed to raise awareness about climate change and to encourage businesses to make their own contribution towards more environmentally-friendly operations. But even if the attitude of the employees is changed by the campaign's promotion, the companies are still out for profit, and hence expand their operations when they can. To conclude, from my perspective the WWF mission contradicts from the primary goal of their business partners and raises an additional problem, which is the mass consumption.

Messaging

Message is a form of persuasion, particularly supposed to resonate to the target audience. Thus, it was important to define what the WWF was asking the participants to do when planning communications for Earth Hour.

Primary message:

- Turn off your lights for one hour on March 28, 2009 at 8.30PM
- Take part in Earth Hour

In some cases the primary message was adapted to different kinds of conditions and the context in the cities people could possibly face, for example, where it was impossible to ask people to turn lights off, they asked them to take part in Earth Hour, to participate.

Secondary messages:

- Register your support for action on climate change and sign up at wwf.ru/60
- Add your voice to the growing number of people who support the fight against climate change
- Everyone's accountable
- Encourage all you know to participate
- Earth Hour can help you reduce your carbon footprint
- 2009 is a destiny year for climate change. Support governments who set emissions reduction targets. (This message with a political connotation was not broadly used)

Also, one of the Barack Obama's campaign creators designed the slogan for Earth Hour - "Vote Earth! Your light switch is your vote" was used in most of the Earth Hour countries. However, WWF Russia rejected the concept of voting because project managers decided that the attitude of people in Russia towards voting is generally negative and perceived as flawed and in a result this perception could reflect in the campaign. I interpret that as taking the social factors and the local context into account, so to be prepared for the potential negative reactions and counteractions.

An important element of a campaign's strategic communication is its message. According to Cox, a message is usually a phrase or sentence that concisely expresses a campaign's objective and values at stake in the decision of the primary audience. In this case study, the main messages are "turn off your lights for one hour" and a headline "Earth Hour" itself. Although considerable information and further arguments are developed and provided, the message is short, simple, clear, compelling, and easy to remember as well as it accompanies all of a campaign's communication materials, also, it is seeking to influence people's attitudes and affect their behaviors. The message (which was used along with the symbol of the campaign) is not complete communication, but attracts attention on the part of a target audience to a campaign's other material.

Nitsch claims, that commitment to environmental issues motivates people to learn more about those issues, which result in further commitment. A kind of secondary message was to register on the website, that in turn was a source for monitoring, but also, could serve as effective commitment in a written form as well as "everyone's accountable" message. Also, "Earth Hour can help you reduce your carbon footprint" message helps people to see themselves as environmentally concerned and therefore more committed to the activity. It includes a benefit for the target audience, aimed to encourage willingness to change their behavior.

In general, the messages summarize the campaign's objective, state its central values and provide a frame for audiences' understanding and reception of the details with respect to its other informational materials.

Monitoring and identification how to measure success

Since it was important to define what success looks like for Earth Hour in the city, and to identify the tools needed to measure this, the Earth Hour Global Team developed an Earth Hour Measurement Pack, which outlined ways to measure/report success.

The tools included:

- "Before" and "after" photographs/video
- Key icons/landmarks in the dark
- Number of countries/cities participating
- Website sign-ups (business and individuals)
- Website visitors (downloads etc)
- Top Businesses publicly committed
- Energy measurement

Official web-site was used as a main source for monitoring, where everyone who participated in the campaign could register and that amount of people the WWF presented as official statistic participation data. But according to the interviewed coordinator there was a hindrance, since some people do not have an Internet access, or, for instance, if only one family

member is registered, then does it mean that the rest members of the family participated as well? Officially, it was said that about 1 million people participated in the event. Now, they are planning to make survey in the regions of the country. For that reason, they collaborate with the social agency "The Public Opinion": their method is face-to-face interviews in urban and rural areas.

Compared to most of the European countries, monitoring of WWF organizations in Europe were based on municipalities and thus, the municipalities were responsible for their own monitoring of participants, however, this tactic did not work in Russia's case.

When it comes to media monitoring - the message about Earth Hour in Russia was covered by 34 sources of mass media (50% - TV). In a span of 2 months, the WWF received 1400 publications about Earth Hour along with 20 publications in international mass media. The WWF web-site attendance increased almost 10 fold (about 600.000 during the two months). In terms of media coverage and according to the WWF coordinator, it was a huge success compared to their other campaigns. However, the effect was hard to monitor, unlike, for example in the case of standard product management. But why was it difficult to monitor when communicating environmental issues and what is the difference in regards to the media's coverage of regular product advertising an environmental issues? For example, the standard marketing is aimed to enhance consumption growth, expand consumer choice and ensure consumer satisfaction, while on the contrary, environmental communication is aimed to increase the quality of life, since the quality of life includes not only the abundance of high-quality goods and services but also maintaining high environmental quality. In standard product marketing, no matter what kind of product it might be, a consumer receives benefit and/or incentive immediately. For example, you buy a car, and what happens? You are no longer dependent on public transport and it makes your transportation easier and more comfortable, moreover, a good car increases your status in society and according to an advertising campaign of one particular car manufacturer, women/men tend to like you more if you are driving their automobile. Also, an auto manufacturer could easily monitor the effect of its advertising, based on how many cars were sold in a specific period. On the other hand, environmental communication tends to change social values, attitude and behavior. For instance, there is no immediate and visible benefit when you use a car less, but there is a long-term benefit in terms of a healthy environment, social approval and establishing social norms, which in turn cannot be easily changed. Moreover, it is not easy to monitor a behavioral change. Environmental issues are more complex and require a lot of input and elaboration in terms of communication.

Identification of how to communicate/report success

The tools how to communicate the city's and county's results were defined in advance:

- Press Conference day after Earth Hour (including data release)
- Press release distributed at the same time
- Announcement on wwf.ru/60
- Pre-prepared feature/liftout with newspaper partner
- Full data report distributed within weeks of Earth Hour
- Footage/DVD capturing the success/essence of Earth Hour

Use of symbols in the campaign

In reference to symbolic interactionism, symbols are representations used only because people create them to be with an abstract meaning instead of a physical one. The ones who use symbols knows what they are doing, they understand what the symbols are supposed to represent and those, to whom they were communicated understand it as well.

The entire campaign was built upon symbolic action, which was to turn off the light and was supposed to represent a global concern around climate change. In order to encourage a wider

audience to participate, the light was turned off in the landmark building, which was symbolic as well: the main buildings with no light in a city definitely attract attention because people certainly notice a significant change like that. Also, landmarks and famous buildings could provide a visual and symbolic representation of Earth Hour's success in the city.

The main symbol that was broadly used was the earth in the shape of the number 60 against a black background. This symbolizes the earth being in darkness for 60 minutes. It can also be interpreted that everyone is participating since the whole image of the earth is within the number 60. The symbol is vivid, eye-catching and capturing attention. The campaign's objectives and all the information that is needed for someone to take appropriate action are conveyed in the poster: to turn off the light on the specific date.



During the planning period, in order to gain support for the campaign in Moscow from business companies, media and partners, WWF Russia used white glass bottles with the number 60 logo on it, a letter inside, as well as a candle. The bottle with a letter in it is generally a symbol of an SOS signal and the candle could be used during the Earth Hour, which was also one of the symbols used in the campaign. The content of the letter included a reason to participate in the campaign, the guidelines with respect to what a company should do and tips the company may use to be more environmentally concerned. However, the letters for the City and Government officials were sent in a formal way (official blanks, stamps etc).



In addition, the WWF organized a launch with media representatives as part of the campaign. The meeting was held in the supported partner-restaurant "In the darkness," known as socially-oriented (as they have their own charity events in order to help blind people), in the restaurant there is totally dark room with the blind waiters, and the room is decorated with the candles (one of the symbols of the Earth Hour).

To sum up, symbols allow for the sharing of understanding, to tell others what one thinks, what one knows and what one intends and at the same time, as a kind of communication, symbols actively shapes our understanding. However, there is a room for misunderstanding, for example, according to my Internet review on the Earth Hour, some people could not understand the message of the campaign, saying that “why should I turn off the light, if it does not give anything; the action is meaningless.” Referring to the previous sentence, I assume that, most likely, it is difficult to express what one means, it is almost impossible to know what the meaning of a symbol is from the perspective of the communicator. Symbolic communication between actors is obviously most successful when both the communicator and the receiver have the same understanding. However, perhaps it is the ambiguity of symbols which makes them so useful in human society.

Obviously, WWF had other reasons behind the symbolic action to turn off the lights; looking at the campaign’s objective it was aimed to attract the most possible attention of the world community to the climate change issue and according to WWF statistics the objective was successfully achieved.

Consequences

These are the results, which the campaign has brought and benefitted through the symbolic action:

- Mayor of the Moscow became very interested in the problems of climate change. As follow-up he is going to launch an educational campaign (called Moscow Hour). It is aimed to promote rational use of energy, water and other resources in the schools of the city.

- The campaign reached record amount of people, e.g. in the Russian facebook group they gained 25.000 more supporters in 2 months (in comparison with 10.000 before). As a consequence, it allowed for the expansion of some local campaigns. For example, the WWF planned to launch a campaign in Moscow aimed to clean up parks within city limits. But in result of Earth Hour and increased interest they launched a campaign called “Clean Forest” in other regions of the country, since people were expressing actively an interest to take concrete actions.

- According to the social agency "Public opinion", only 50% of the people in Russia know about the climate change and global warming (prior to the Earth Hour), including journalists, thus, the WWF is planning to do the educational press-conference for the mass media about the aspects of the climate change, as a part of the WWF climate program.

- As a consequence, the WWF gained popularity in mass media, so now they can use the created information field as leverage and the established contacts for follow-up campaigns.

Overall Reflections

In a relation to the data, presented to the general public, the crucial goal of the campaign was to reach everyone in the country so they could express their concern about climate change by turning off the light in the households, while further investigation shows that the factual expectation from the campaign in the long term was to trigger political changes even though the NGO never used this message as a primary one because, according to WWF staff, by doing so they could lose the potential supporters. Thus, an organization made an assumption that large amount of people’s voices would bring about change on the policy-making level. But how reliable was this assumption? According to the interviewed communicator, they were aware of the given threat of not producing planned political changes, but I got the impression that they perceived the campaign as successful in terms of other means, which the organization could

benefit from, such as, broad public attraction, media coverage, newly gained business supporters as well as overall popularity.

Among the WWF staff, the Earth Hour claimed to be an educational campaign, but in my view, they did not use educational messages, while encouraging messages to participate were broadly used. Also, the educational information concerning why it is important to be aware and to fight global warming or any other ecological aspects of global warming was missed by the organization on the web-page as well. They said that they collaborated with the Fund “Public opinion,” and from the survey it shows that 50% of people in Russia think the global warming’s effect is negative, while 30% of others think the effect is neutral (20% percent do not know about the environmental problem). Then, I think WWF lacked to show the negative aspects of climate change, although at the same time threatening messages could lead in losing potential supporters (Sears et al 1985), but it seems to me that WWF’s primary aim was to motivate the people *to participate* (register on the web-page) so they could use the amount of registered people in a long-term but not to educate them. How did the people understand the campaign? During my internship period, I read people’s answers in relation to a contest, which was ran by the WWF called “How can you spend the Earth Hour”. Most of people liked the campaign, however, only 20% touched upon the climate change aspects, e.g. saying that they would talk to their kids about environmental problems, but about 80% of them were saying that they were going to listening to music in the darkness, go for a walk or take a bath with the candles, also saying they are really motivated to participate in the contest just to get the free T-shirt with the Earth Hour label on it, but not really mentioning the “corner stone” of the environmental issue. To conclude, in my opinion, the WWF relied on a top-down approach – through the government to the change in people’s behavior, since the campaign’s goal was to gain a *large number* of participants while the people’s behavior or attitude change concerning climate change was not questioned during the campaign.

Concluding remarks

In reference to Cox, any environmental advocacy campaign is based on defining three fundamental questions, such as, objectives, audience and strategies.

In the given paper I emphasize the difference between specific objectives and the long-term goals: first of all, the campaign was aimed to attract the widest possible attention of the entire community to the problem of global climate change by a symbolic action of turning off the light. For the internal success outline WWF chose just that very objective (namely, an amount of people registered, administration and ambassadors attraction and participation, turning-off the light in the iconic buildings and advertising), which is concrete, time-limited and measurable in terms of quantity. Whereas, in a long-term the campaign was seeking to sign post-Kyoto Protocol and encourage people, including businesses and governmental bodies, to save energy and other natural resources. It corresponds with a theory, since the campaign is seeking to change certain external conditions, although at the same time it happens through the influence of individual behavior, seen as a step toward systemic change in society’s treatment of the environment.

Second, when it comes to the audience, the question the campaign was considering was how to mobilize the supporters, to convince persuadables, translating the passive support into active participation, recruit opinion leaders and the media. In case of Earth Hour, it is important to point out, the target audience was everyone (individuals, corporations, governments), NGO was not directly trying to influence the only one government of a certain country or, for example, certain local council/officials like most of the advocacy campaigns, but the whole global community, since it is a global issue. But what did they want the target audience to know or not to know? The long-term goal or, more precisely, the message that the campaign is supporting the

government action on climate change was not broadly used or was done in a subtle way so as not to lose a potential mass audience.

The last quintessential question is what will persuade the decision makers to act on the objective? The Earth Hour's strategy is built upon the belief that symbolic action has the power to transcend social and cultural barriers to move the world community to the real accomplishments, or in other words, symbolic action is able to do something as well as literally to say something. However, it may also open a room for misunderstanding for some public: it was hard to explain the symbolism of the action, since the Earth Hour did not bring any saving in terms of economic indicators or electricity conservation.

Further, an important element of a campaign's strategic communication is its message. In this case the crucial and central message is Earth Hour, that concisely expresses a campaign's objective, which itself is short, compelling and memorable. Although, it does not cover all aspects of the campaign, but opens the door of attention of the target audience to a campaign's other material.

Also, the channels to pass the message and the appropriate tools are the important elements of any campaign. Leaflets, internet actions: website page, email bulletins, Facebook group and events; media and online coverage, email bulletins, press conference, press releases, banners, advertising, competitions, school programs etc had been used to reach as many people as possible. In addition, since the individuals that present the message can have a dramatic impact upon how it is received, it is important to be ensured that the one who delivers a message is seen as credible and trust-worthy: WWF engaged the ambassadors and celebrities to be the campaign's channel to a wider audience. Moreover, official web-site was used as a main source for participation monitoring. However, as it happens in communicating environmental issues, the effect was hard to monitor due to the complexity of monitoring an actual behavior change. In general, in implementing a strategy a campaign relies on educational and persuasive messages, spokespeople, and events to mobilize a group's base of support and persuadables, as well as opinion leaders and media to influence the primary audience to act on the campaign's objective, also taking into account the local context: Russia was the only one country in a global network that did not use earthhour.org as a main website due to the language barrier it could create for the Russian people, but used wwf.ru/60 instead; in framing a message WWF Russia rejected the concept of voting because the attitude of people in Russia towards voting is generally negative and perceived as flawed and in a result that perception could reflect in the campaign.

To conclude, when it comes to the Earth Hour, the effectiveness of the symbolic action can be questioned and criticized. Considering the primary objective of the campaign, saving of electricity was not an aim, the purpose was to attract attention, raise awareness and demonstrate that the global society claims to fight the climate change. WWF used pragmatic and constitutive tools of different kinds to influence society's attitude and behaviors through the modes of communication – persuasion, rhetoric, images, advertising, news stories and other modes of symbolic action, hoping through the symbolic act of turning off the light to trigger social and political change.

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