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Communication in the Millennium

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(Turkey)
The Association of Turkish and American Scholars
(ATACS)

The international symposium Communication in the Millennium has been organized since 2003 by scholars in Turkey and the United States, and each year the symposium organizers have noticed increasing interest in this academic event. Because of this interest, the co-founders and the organization committee of this symposium decided to form an association where both countries’ scholars are represented.

The mission of the ATACS is to advance the communication profession in both countries through well-grounded academic research and to foster communication academics’ cooperation. The Communication in the Millennium is the established ATACS project, but the association will be working on different projects to serve its mission in the near future.


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10th International Symposium Communication in the Millennium


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Abstract
Sustainable development is firstly, an environmental and social subject rises in importance every passing day. That is a positive step for humanity. When activating about sustainable development, a firm must create proper communication strategy for its workspace.

The study's aim is to have a Turkey-oriented perspective within the scope of the sustainable development. Companies want to integrate sustainable development projects with their corporate social responsibility activities, and thus sustainable development projects of the corporations become visible in media.

Within the scope of the study, the research will look at how frequently the companies in Turkey apply strategies of sustainable development, what are the purposes for carrying out sustainable development, to what extent they integrate sustainable development activities with corporate social responsibility approach, which department/s carry out sustainable development projects, and which communication strategies and public relations methods are used in the projects. The researchers will overall look at whether the companies position sustainable development as a ‘formality’ or as a medium of corporate social responsibility and corporate citizenship.

Keywords: communication strategy, sustainable development

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES: A CONTENT ANALYSIS IN THE TURKEY CONTEXT

Introduction
Organizations world-wide have induced and have faced resource depletion and pollution (Payne and Raiborn, 2001: 157).
Conventional economics tends to set aside the natural resource inputs, and the output costs of the absorption capacity of the environment. Ecological economics processes natural resources rather than human-made capital as the binding constraint on societal well-being. The system of ecological economics strives to make measurement on the regenerative capacity of resources, analyzes the tradeoff decisions to be truly sustainable, and suggests sufficient policies for a more sustainable economy (Loomis, 2000: 894).

We know that in this day and age, a lot of conglomerates show off the projects of sustainable development to the society within the scope of awareness about corporate social responsibility. A sustainable development project is indeed a part of public relations function of private equity firms.

It is obvious that sustainable development is a polemical subject. It seems sustainable development is a good idea for societies about some problems of the countries. But a question appears as well. “Why does a company undertake social problems?” This is a challenging question to answer straightly.

Some of philosophers and academicians opine that the activities of sustainable development are the suppression efforts about adverse effects of the companies on their publics and the communities.

In fact, the notion of “sustainable development” is in use of good intention about the corporations that apply the activities in public. Such initiatives are approved by numerous segments of the societies.

It is clearly seen that global corporates as P&G and Unilever have carried out the works in the field of sustainable development in recent years. The foundations those firms have established get busy all over the world. In order to bring about the activities of sustainable development especially in the developing countries as Turkey, the works of the global corporates which share in the economies of these countries come into prominence.

2. The Notion of Sustainable Development

As Mog (2004: 2139) emphasizes that “sustainability” is an inherently dynamic, indefinite and contested concept (Mog, 2004: 2139).

The term sustainable development emerged in the 1970s, but gained importance during and after the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development known as the Bruntland Commission (Payne and Raiborn, 2001: 157).

The notion of sustainable development has become something of an intellectual quagmire of contested uncertainty (Mog, 2004: 2140).

The term integrates the four entities of society, environment, government, and business. Sustainable development focuses on the present but respects the needs of future generations as well as the memories and desires of past ones (Fergus and Rowney, 2005: 18).

Sustainable development must be appeared as an unending process (Mog, 2004: 2139).

The Bruntland Report defines the notion of sustainable development as the following:

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

1. the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
The term is defined not by fixed goals or the specific means of achieving the goals, but by an approach to making change through continuous learning and adaptation (Mog, 2004: 2139).

The datings as Rio de Janerio (Earth) Summit and Kyoto Protocol may have generated the new-found interest about environmental social responsibility Payne and Raiborn, 2001: 157).

According to the approach of sustainable development, we see the world as a system. A system that connects space; and a system that connects time (IISD, 2012).

The goal of sustainable development efforts is to fight against global poverty, prevent environmental pollution, and work for the green world dream. In order to achieve these goals, there needs to be cooperative efforts of public institutions, multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations with the United Nations.

Reducing poverty and achieving sustained development are connected with a healthy planet (UNDP Turkey, 2012). All elements of recruitment of the world’s system can be thought as a part of gear ring. The recruitment programme includes interaction about important subjects of the world.

Exploitation of natural resources harm the people who live in touch with nature (UNDP Turkey, 2012). For healthy future of human being, natural resources must be protected. Thus, the people who use the natural resources for their mainstay will be able to feel in safe.

Global problems such as climate change, poverty, human right violations and HIV/AIDS have been important for international business the past years in the context of social and environmental impacts (Kolk and van Tulder, 2010: 119).

3. Awareness Of Sustainable Development in Turkey
High population growth, rising incomes and energy consumption have threatened Turkey’s vulnerable ecosystem (UNDP Turkey, 2012).

In summary, the obstacles to achieve sustainable development efforts come under water shortages, land degradation, lack of clean and affordable energy resources (UNDP Turkey, 2012).

It is observed that the companies which are operating in Turkey and also the public sector have carried out many projects related to sustainable development day-by-day. The reason behind that is that Turkey is among the developing countries, and the institutions such as the United Nations take a leading part and encourage public sector and companies.

UNDP works closely with a number of government agencies, municipalities, private sector partners and NGO’s to help Turkey to find solutions about sustainable development (UNDP Turkey, 2012).

We notice that the activities of creating awareness about sustainable development have just begun and the works on permanent and active action planning have continued in recent years. We can explain that nongovernmental organizations and government agencies take active roles in the activities. The Ministry of Development on behalf of the public enterprises coordinate the activities of development. The companies in the private sector bring about the activities of sustainable development as well as the public enterprises. More companies increasingly conduct the projects of sustainable development day by day. Neither in the world nor in Turkey the phenomenon of sustainable development have
settled completely, therefore the companies prefer interoperating to rivaling with each other. Because the projects of sustainable development are social and environmental oriented, but not profit-oriented. In addition, the corporates need partners to bring about all-inclusive projects.

In today’s business world, public relations firms take note of sustainable development activities. For example, NPR is one of the first signatory firms “Global Compact” in Turkey in 2006. NPR mention about importance of sustainable development to the stakeholders. The board chairman of this public relations firm explains that the firm had performed works in the field of sustainable development for three years in succession. In the public relations sector, the first sustainability report was prepared by NPR in 2011 (Başnur, 08.03.2012).

4. Generation Communication Strategies in the Context of Sustainable Development

We can state the source of “strategy” comes from the field of military. In the dictionaries, we see this term towards planning and directing movements and operation (Dictionary.com, 10.04.2012; Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary, 2004: 1239). But the term of strategy also means “skill in management” in the third meaning (Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary, 2004: 1239) such as the first meaning.

Nowadays, firms are searching to link CSR strategies to manage international operations and access a licence to operate in different cultural and institutional settings (Kolk and van Tulder, 2010: 120). Thus, a lot firms are planning to show their positions as social responsible towards the publics. Because one way of acquiring a reputation is possible with activities as CSR works.

Determining a communication strategy enables to convey straight messages to the publics.

The basic points to take into consideration in the context of creating communication strategies:
1. Show consistency between the message and the action:
2. Make the publics feel about sincerity of the action:
3. Reveal straight action done right on time:

Communication strategies are prerequisite for a polyphony itinerary and attempts which are transparent and apply two-way symmetrical communication prove “sincerity” of the participant organizations with respect to set goals.

Although it is consistently emphasized that sustainable development is an useful mechanism for the world citizens, criticism about sustainable development is increasing day-by-day. The critics claim that the concept of sustainable development is not expressed sufficiently to the public. It emerges that there is a deficiency about presenting, sharing the practices of sustainable development with the public, problem with the ownership of projects by the company employees, and also with implementing communication strategies, but there is not a problem on implementing sustainable development projects. Therefore, communication professionals have begun to take part in sustainable development policies and projects with an active role, especially in the recent years. Both communication executives and the professionals of communication sector have begun to take an intense interest in sustainable development. For example, corporate reputation management consultant Salim Kadıbesegil states that “the professionals who do not become aware of sustainable development business models will not be communication professionals” and with this statement, he emphasizes the interest of communication sector for the concept.

5. The Method of the Research

2011’s data of the ‘Most Popular Companies of Turkey’ research carried out by Capital Magazine annually will be used. The analysis will take into consideration the companies that are positioned in
the study as the most ‘admired’ and ‘reputable.’ A content analysis in the context of sustainable development politics and projects of the most popular companies will be done. The messages given in the stage of actualizing these politics and projects, and communication strategies will be analyzed. Communication strategies of these corporations and communication strategies according to the industries will be looked at.

Also the projects and communication strategies of multinational global companies which are in the most admired companies 2011 list in Turkey, and besides their projects and communication strategies on a global scale will be researched. Thus, the study will discuss how global companies are positioned in Turkey in the context of sustainable development. Whether sustainable development politics and communication strategies of global companies in Turkey differ or not from the headquartes of the companies will be analyzed.

6. Findings

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<tr>
<th>COMPANY</th>
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<td>Turkcell</td>
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<td>Garanti Bankasi</td>
<td>Finance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unilever</td>
<td>Retail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkish Airlines (THY)</td>
<td>Aviation</td>
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<td>İş Bankası</td>
<td>Finance</td>
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<td>Vodafone</td>
<td>Gsm</td>
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<td>Borusan Holding</td>
<td>Holding</td>
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<td>BSH</td>
<td>Consumer durables</td>
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<td>Automotive</td>
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Table 1. Companies
Graph 1. Is The Company a Member of Global Compact?

One-half of the companies are the members of Global Compact and the other one-half of the companies are not. Global Compact is a detailed compact that includes the subjects such as ethics, social responsibility, and sustainable development.

Graph 2. Does The Company Have Any Foundation?

44\% of the companies have a foundation.
Graph 3. What is The Scope of The Foundations?

We see that education, health, culture, art, and financial support come into prominence for the foundations of the companies.

Graph 4. Does The Company Have Any CSR Activity?
Almost all of the companies have the activities of corporate social responsibility
Graph 5. What is The Scope Of CSR?
The activities of corporate social responsibility are mostly in the field of education, culture&art, environment, sports

Graph 6. Does The Company Have Sustainable Development Report?
%40 of the companies (Toyota, Borusan, Tüpraş, Unilever, Vodafone, Türk Telekom) publish sustainable development report.

7. Conclusion
When we research the approaches about sustainable development activities of Turkey’s most popular companies, we can notice that the companies such as Unilever and Vodafone take note of this subject. Even these companies establish foundations to fulfil the activities. We determine that the sustainable development activities of the global companies such as IBM, Vodafone, Mercedes, Unilever, and Toyota in Turkey have parallels with in other countries. The result shows that the global companies try to perform the same policy in all countries.
We observe that the companies perform the actions of advertising, activity, and public relations for the publicity of corporate social responsibility. But we also see that the companies merely publish reports for sustainable development. All in all, the companies feature the activities of corporate social responsibility. We observe that sustainable development appears in the companies less than corporate social responsibility. The companies are trying to differentiate with the activities of corporate social responsibility at the present time. When we research the sustainable development reports, we notice that the companies use nearly the same formats in the context of template and style.

In the meaning of communication strategy, we observe that the activities of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development precondition meanwhile and in the same category. But communication strategies are predominantly established on corporate social responsibility.

As increasing sustainable development practices and understanding importance of the notion, the companies will be able to enhance specific communication strategies for sustainable development.

References


