

Journal of  
**Social and Administrative Sciences**

www.kspjournals.org

Volume 4

June 2017

Issue 2

**Strategic Communication in Chaos Management and a  
Case Study**

*By* Hasan LATIF<sup>a</sup> & Tuğçe ELMAS<sup>b†</sup>

**Abstract.** Effective communication may be sufficient under normal conditions, but in chaos conditions strategic communication is required. There has been cases of unsuccessful management during times of sudden huge problems due to the use of wrong communication behaviors. This work presents together an example and the requisites of a successful a strategic communicator in chaotic conditions. The study begins with examples of mismanagement behaviors in strategic communication. It establishes a link between chaos management and strategic communication. A successful example on this topic is drawn from an analysis done on the strategic communication behaviors of the vice president of Coca-Cola Company Shay Drohan considering his ability in the use of strategic communication in handling chaotic situations.

**Keywords.** Chaos management, Strategic communication, Coca-Cola, Case study.

**JEL.** H12, M10, M12, L10.

## 1. Introduction

It is very difficult for businesses that cause damage to the social and global dimensions to seek ways in correcting their mistakes by trying to defend their images and defining who they actually are. In order to make up for the reputation lost, intensive communication activities carried out in Ogoniland (Corby, 2011), by Shell in different fields were not enough (Kaygısız & Dinç, 2011). After the catastrophic disaster in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, BP CEO Tony Hayward made great gaffes (e.g. The Gulf of Mexico is a very big ocean. The amount of volume of oil and dispersant we are putting into it is tiny in relation to the total water volume). Due to this, the job of Hayward was terminated ("I'd have sacked BP boss", (2010), June 9, "BP's Tony Hayward", (2010), July 26). A sports manager could not reduce the chaos he faced in his early days; this led to his contradictory statements and polemics (Latif & Uçkun, 2014). The sport manager was able to serve for six months (TFF, 2012).

Chaos or complexity is the tendency of a system to turn into different situations in a short time. Chaotic conditions and level of chaos are important to the manager. Confusion and difficulty could be faced by a manager, who has never come across these sudden chaos conditions and finding solutions to them. In coincidental and unexpected situations, foresight, calmness and interventive skills (Latif & Uçkun, 2014), a broad perspective and creativity (Hermann, 1996) are important qualities. In relation with chaos considerations, during conditions where uncertainty,

<sup>a</sup> Kocaeli University, Hereke Vocational School, Turkey.

☎. +90 262 742 3290

✉. haslat@gmail.com

<sup>b†</sup> Sakarya University, Institute of Social Sciences, Turkey.

☎. +90 264 295 5544

✉. tugceelmas91@gmail.com

unpredictability, and coincidence are high, is important to be a chaos manager (Marion & Uhl-Bien 2001).

The more complex the problem, the more complicated the communication efforts must be. Global managers (Saner, & Yiu, 2003) have characterized business diplomats instead of global managers.] with diplomatic style, tactfulness, behavioral intelligence, strategic communication skills, attempt to find solutions to problems and to contribute to sustainability. Global managers, with strong local involvement, seek to influence the community at the local and global level through forums, conferences and media.

Strategic communication is regarded a matter of importance in areas of national interest such as defense and security. Goldman's (2007) likens communication to a strategic weapon used in overpowering alliances and deterring an enemy. According to him, strategic communication is a strategy that influences attitudes and behaviors; listening, understanding and drawing attention process are both vocal and actions. Communication activities are a strategy, not designed for a specific audience, but designed for comprehensive and diverse masses. It is a strategy used when communication activities are continuous rather than intermittent. Communication is strategic when it is not sender-centered, but receiver-centered, or a strategy customized for the recipient

In a growing chaotic world, businesses use strategic communication in order to reach their goals (Hallahan, *et al.*, 2012). Since the 1980s, communication has been regarded a function of strategic management, a management tool and a force. From the view of managers, strategic communication and communication strategy, has been considered as a strategic and a competitive tool, and as a tool used in correcting the image and realization of the mission of businesses (Pélage, 2004; Cassette & Verhas, 1998).

According to Kellermann (1992) unlike an automatic communication, strategic communication is planned on the basis of a conscious and an in-depth thought. Strategic communication has a critical role in chaos management; it can either reduce or increase chaos. According to Ray (1999), in the event of a chaos, strategic communication helps businesses to keep confident and to minimize losses.

Effective communication is a fundamental issue, however strategic communication becomes a leading and supportive factor in sustainability initiatives. In the designing of a strategic communication, the creation of a persuasive model and its reiterate are important tools. Attention should be paid to the design and scope of the message in strategic communication, (Allen, 2016). Strategic communication management evaluates the effectiveness of messages by the use of strategic approaches. Strategic communication highlights the differences of the business and emphasizes the answer to the question "why should you choose us?"

## 2. Research Methods

This research study looks at strategic communication and strategic communication skills in chaos management. A real case study has been used in his regard. The case was derived from a statement by Coca-Cola Company vice-president which was published in a newspaper (Ertürk, 2012). "A carbonated beverage in a day doesn't cause any harm" there are so many reasons this headline caption was chosen as a case study and its contents analyzed. First, this case study highlights the importance of strategic communication skills in terms of management. Second, this case study is original; thus, with its analysis and its results, it gives top managers a guide in the rise of similar cases. Third; in training of prospective managers this case study can be used as an academic course.

The aim of the research is to examine whether Coca-Cola is harmful or harmless and not to give an opinion to this topic. The aim; is to present the strategic communication skills demonstrated by the co-president of the Coca-Cola

Company in chaos management. Also at this point let's not overlook this truth; which is acknowledgement of the scientists who made clear the harmfulness of sugary and sugar sweetened, carbonated beverages (Hu, 2013; Willett, 2009; Malik *et al.*, 2010; Kleiman & Popkin, 2012; Palmer *et al.*, 2008).

In this research, a case study which seeks to give an academic message in an unusual, interesting, attractive and a story telling form was considered. In the study, with the questions of (what happened) descriptive and (how and why it happened) explanatory were asked to elaborate on the depth of the case.

Regarding document selection and sampling, the remarks of Weber (1990) and Mayring (2000) were taken into account. There is only one written document on this case; which is, a published message in a newspaper. This message has been read and the story retrieved from there. Then, content analysis was carried out. Remarks were made based on explicit (written) content and also a likelihood of hidden (unwritten) content (Krippendorff, 2004). After identifying the statements to be analyzed, the content of the case was analyzed using the key expression context, word and/or frequency of expression usage, relationship and proximity analysis techniques.

### 3. The Story of the Case

"A carbonated drink in a day causes no harm" was the newspaper caption of the case (Ertürk, 2012) and the sub-caption read, "Drinking a carbonated drink in a day causes no harm. All things should be consumed reasonably, the perceptions of harmfulness of carbonated drinks evaluated by Shay Drohan"

In his talk on "Creating Shared Value Through Shared Values" at the brand Conference in Swissotel The Bosphorus held on December 13, 2012, the Coca-Cola Company Senior Vice President, Sparkling Brands Shay Drohan says: I have a president who expects from me 1 billion bottles sales a day, and even more the following day. I work with a Turkish CEO with high expectations. I could not have asked for a better boss. Working with Muhtar Kent is a very good experience. A person who constantly sets new targets ahead. We are very lucky in this regard.

Regarding a question asked on his perceptions on the harmfulness of carbonated drinks, Drohan made this evaluations: Drinking a carbonated drink in a day causes no harm. All things should be consumed reasonably. Following this reply, Drohan was directed to ask the question: Is there any harm in drinking excessively? Drohan replied as follows: We have not yet reached this level of consumption. People have to pay attention to what they eat and drink, and everything that goes into our body should be of a balance.

Another issue that Drohan touched on was the Turkish market: Our activities in Turkey has approached 50 years. We consider Turkey as a benchmark when comparing markets. In order to get our ideas across we can use Turkey as a pilot or leading market. It's a great market for trying new things. In Turkey, a more serious growth can be achieved. I have two important reasons to believe in the Turkish market. There will be an increase in the population and the economy will grow. Turkish consumers love and believe in our brand. There are good opportunities for Coca-Cola in Turkey. Light and Zero succeeded here; we do not want to distract ourselves with other products.

### 4. Content Analysis of the Case and Interpretation

Shay Drohan, Vice President of The Coca-Cola Company is the only actor in the case studied. The fact is Dorhans' evaluations on perception of carbonated beverages as harmful. This case has a very obvious, unusual and interesting aspect; which is the need for an illustrative case in defense of a harmful perceived product. It is not easy to explain and defend the product by business executives who produce and sell such products. It's very difficult to erase and correct the negative perceptions imbedded in the minds of people about the product. It is even more

difficult to transform these negative perceptions into positive ones. Managers at all times face questions regarding the product being harmfully perceived.

When we take a look at the story of the case, Drohan who made evaluations on carbonated beverages perceived as a harmful beverage pointed out that, "Drinking a carbonated drink in a day causes no harm. All things should be consumed reasonably". In relation to the question of whether more excessive consumption was harmful or not, Drohan replied "We have not yet reached this level of consumption. People have to pay attention to what they eat and drink, and everything that goes into our body should be in a balance".

The expressions "useful" or "harmful" is not seen in Drohan's statements. Rather the expression "reasonable amount" is seen. It is not made clear whether "once in a day" is the reasonable amount. "Once a day" is a key phrase. This phrase appears 3 times in the case story, "not harmful" appears three times, "carbonated beverage" three times, "reasonable amount" twice, "Coca-Cola" once, "Turkey" six times, "Selling 1 billion bottles every day" once.

Drohan didn't say, "Two drinks a day is harmful", "after all many harmful things are being eaten and drunk". He would have made an error if he said this. Is there no desire to want to drink twice a day? Undoubtedly there is. This level of consumption is the level of consumption desired from the view of Drohan. Assuming that this level of consumption has been reached, is Drohan saying "Don't drink the second, stay off"? No!

It is understood that there is a closeness between "one fizzy (carbonated) drink per day" and "selling 1 billion bottles every day" key expressions, and that the first one gives support to the second one. In the meantime, if we consider the expression "carbonated beverage" rather than the expression "Coca-Cola" we can come up with this clarification that was not made by Drohan: Among peoples' preferable beverages, is Coca-Cola. Thus in the world's data of carbonated beverages in countries where carbonated drinks are mostly consumed, Coca-Cola is indicated the highest consumed ([Countries with the Highest, n.d.](#)). In Turkey, in the consumption of soft drinks Coca-Cola is the leading company ([Soft drinks in Turkey, 2017](#)).

Drohan believes in Coca-Cola. According to Drohan, when people decide to have a soft drink, in most cases it's Coca-Cola. This will be enough for Coca-Cola to reach its goal. More than 200 countries around the world consume more than 1.9 billion servings of beverages of Coca-Cola Company every day ([How many drinks, n.d.](#)).

The phrases, "Drinking a carbonated drink in a day causes no harm", "All things should be consumed reasonably. People have to pay attention to what they eat and drink, and everything that goes into our body should be in a balance" can be likened to the drug or health related products use advices. Therefore, we can say that people will create a prescription effect and this can be said to increase the buying behaviour.

In recent years there has been an increase in the sales volume and revenue of Coca-Cola in Turkey though it's small; there has been a decline in sales volume and revenue in the Middle Eastern countries ([CCI, 2016](#)). According to Drohan, Turkey is a model country and has a base location. The ideas must first be implemented here, and then taken across the Middle East countries by encouraging them.

## 5. Conclusion

Beyond ordinary discourses about a product, the case examined looks at a special communication process. In 2016, Coca-Cola became the world's fourth most valuable brand ([The World's Most, n.d.](#)), and of soft drinks in the world, it became first ([Leading most valuable, n.d.](#)). Coca-Cola tops the most preferred soft drinks. However, there is a prevailing perception that it is harmful. It can be said that, among the people with this perception are people who take pleasure in drinking Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola Company executives on one hand strive to reach their

growth targets, on the other hand, they are trying to overcome the obstacles to growth by transforming the negative perceptions of their products to positive ones. The vice president of Coca-Cola Company Drohan, sets out an extraordinary example in this course.

The questions on the harmfulness of Coca-Cola directed at Drohan can be regarded as a complexity or chaos. Drohan has encountered this complex communication process a couple of times. He is experienced. This complexity is an anticipated situation from his perspective. He is a manager who knows that a small mistakenly uttered word can screw up many things and lead to income losses. He has been able to prove his ability in standing up to the threshold of chaos by responding to the questions posed to him in a balanced, consistent and resolute manner. Drohan demonstrated how a strategic communicator should be.

Drohan, in the various countries like Turkey faces questions about the harmfulness of Coca-Cola. Perhaps this tops the most asked questions. Drohan is not a communicator, but a strategist; he is a manager who demonstrates the ability in establishing a link between strategy and communication that is required of all top managers. He is very responsive to questions and complaints coming to the corporate communication unit and have the ability to transform and evaluate them into a strategic information. Persuading and convincing, is a strategically aimed psychological struggle that has not yet been achieved by the managers of Coca-Cola. Drohan is someone who knows the prevalence of the perceptions that Coca-Cola is harmful, but at the same time he is a global manager who knows that these negative perceptions can be reversed by his ingenuity, tactfulness, and strategic communication skills.

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