NEW TRENDS IN COMMUNICATION

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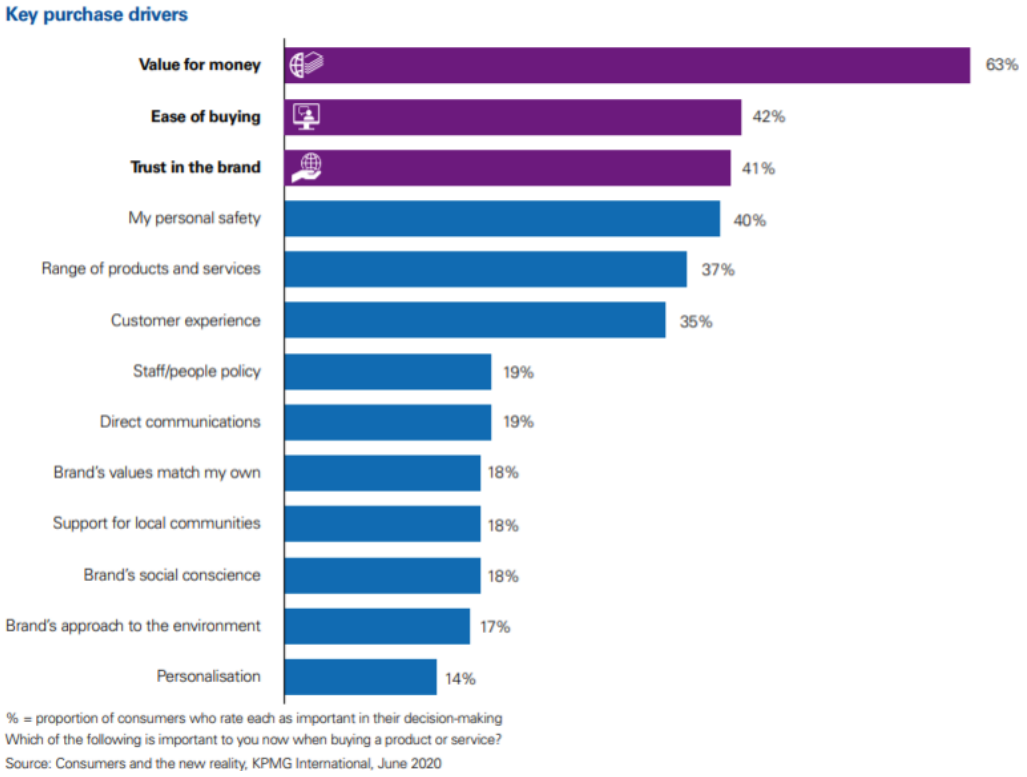
Abstract

Not only the current pandemic situation depicts necessary changes in the communication of companies within different sectors, moreover the increasing emphasis is put on the management of reputation as one of the main attributes of a company philosophy. The company has to gain its reputation, and the reputation has been becoming its greatest asset. According to statistics, the strong corporate image can in average increase the company value by 5 to 7%. In the communication market can be recently observed several trends: companies more frequently focus on their reputation acquisition; when choosing products or services, the recommendations of influencers are becoming important for customers; brands through their opinions are becoming more opened to political and social issues; importance of employer branding and internal communication is a gaining very significant position; in the case of media relations, we are no longer just talking about journalists, but also about the changed type of work of PR employees. Furthermore, the issue of ethics in digital communication emerges as an important issue.

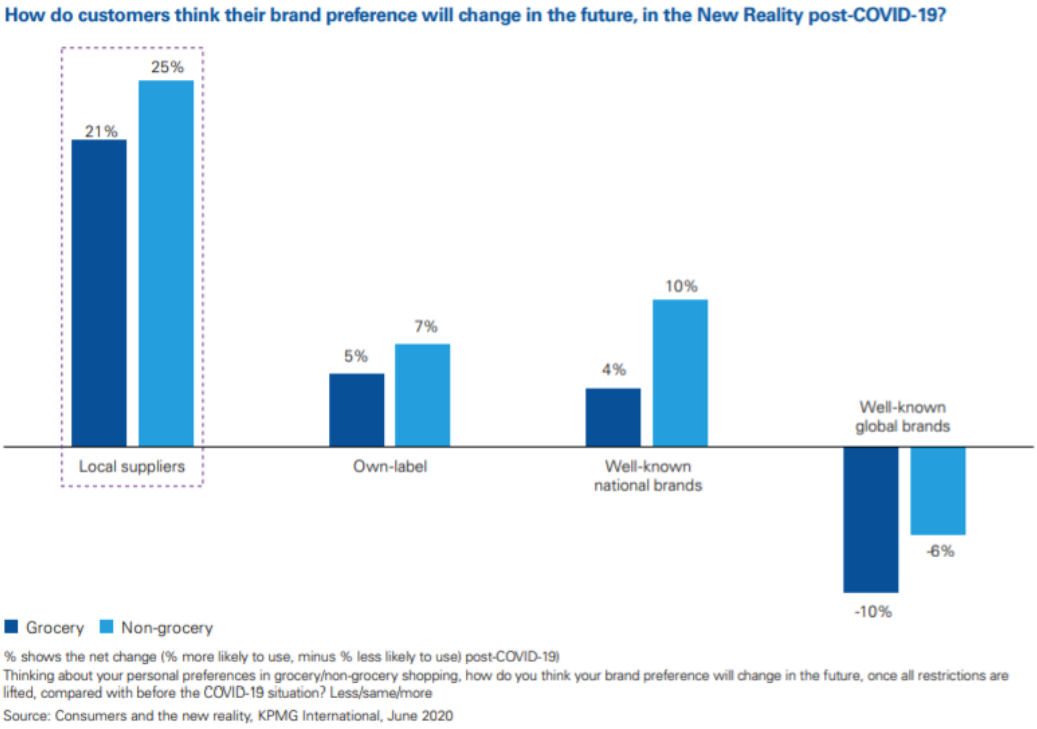
Key words: *Image, Communication, New trends, PR, Reputation*

1. CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR AND COVID-19

The period of pandemic has brought many lockdowns what influence and lead to the changes of customers' preferences regarding the brands: the pandemic has resulted in the loss of many people's jobs, thus the situation result is customers price-oriented behaviour; furthermore, for customers is during lockdown periods important to have a quick access to the brand, and the third is confidence in the brand.



The graph proves higher preferences of local brands compared with global ones:



Except for that, the customers' preference towards brands are also changing in the terms of the brand´s support and help during the pandemic, the acceptance of environmental issues, locality is also taken into account in the terms of sourcing and employing of local people in the given country:



Source: KPMG International Study: *Consumer and the new reality*, June 2020

In the brand communication dominates responsibility, solidarity, and help where companies are much more oriented at the reputation strengthening.

Communication agencies think that the market will change after the pandemic as follows:

- Change of consumers´ behaviour - customers will choose more what is useful for them, and what they really need.
- Change of communication style - hygienic standards in spots, masks ...
- Brands cannot stop their communication, they further need to build on their values.

Source: KRAS – Raňajky s reklamou 28.4.2020 (KRAS - Breakfast with advert of 28.4.2020)

2. WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE COMMUNICATION MARKET

During recent period have occurred many changes in the communication market, many of them are also related to the current pandemic situation:

- 92% of customers trust earned media more than traditional advertisements
- 60% of customers feel more negative about advertising compared with the situation a few years ago
- A stronger corporate image will boost your stock price by an average of 5–7%
- Important is the personal contact in communication of professionals and journalists



Source: https://www.prdaily.com/infographic-statistics-to-drive-your-pr-campaigns/

3. REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

As it was already mentioned, the first company has to gain its reputation and then keep it as its greatest asset. A company with a good reputation is in times of crisis more likely "protected", because even in the crisis time the customers are less likely to believe in negative news about the company they trust.

Customers, employees, but also potential employees increasingly decide on brands based on the company reputation in the market.

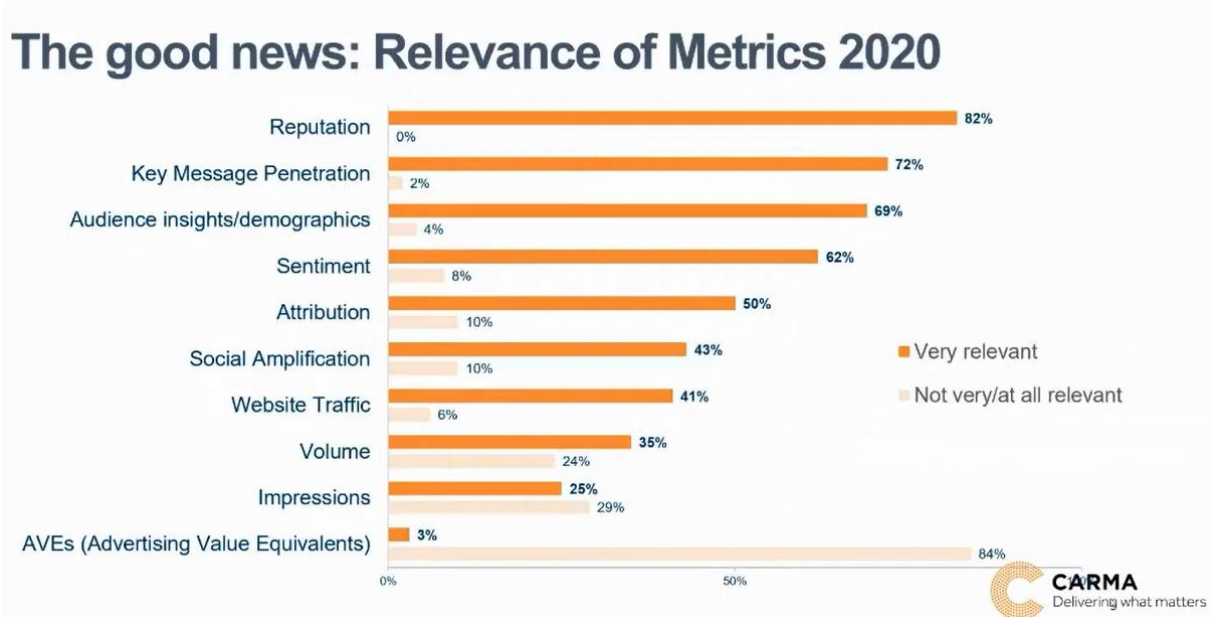
The research examined the key attributes of reputation and their influence on decision-making process of customers with the conclusions as follows:

- Low product price will not fully compensate for unethical behaviour of the manufacturer, unless the customer learns about it; the attributes of a company or brand reputation, in mutual balance, influence the buying decision or the will to recommend the product or service
- People take reputation attributes into account when making buying decisions - even they do not call them reputation attributes in their minds,
- Companies with better reputation are more successful in selling products and the ability to evoke the product or service recommendation to another person compared with the companies with worse reputation. (Benedigová, 2014, p. 64).

Taking into account a trustworthy organization (company), up to 51% of recipients believe in positive news after hearing it once or twice, only 25% believe in negative information after hearing it once or twice. On the other hand, with an untrustworthy organization 57% of recipients believe in negative

information after hearing it once or twice, and only 15% believe in positive information after hearing it once or twice.

When measuring their results communication agencies also prioritize the reputation issue as it is shown in the chart presented by AMEC's Richard Bagnall at the Barcelona Principles 3.0 online conference (3.12.2020):



Source: Edelman Trust Barometer, 2015

3.1. Reputation management and internal communication

The employees also in large scope influence the company reputation: in the case of their satisfaction, they spread outside the good name of company; on the contrary, a frustrated employee creates a negative image of the company, especially when in the direct contact with customers.

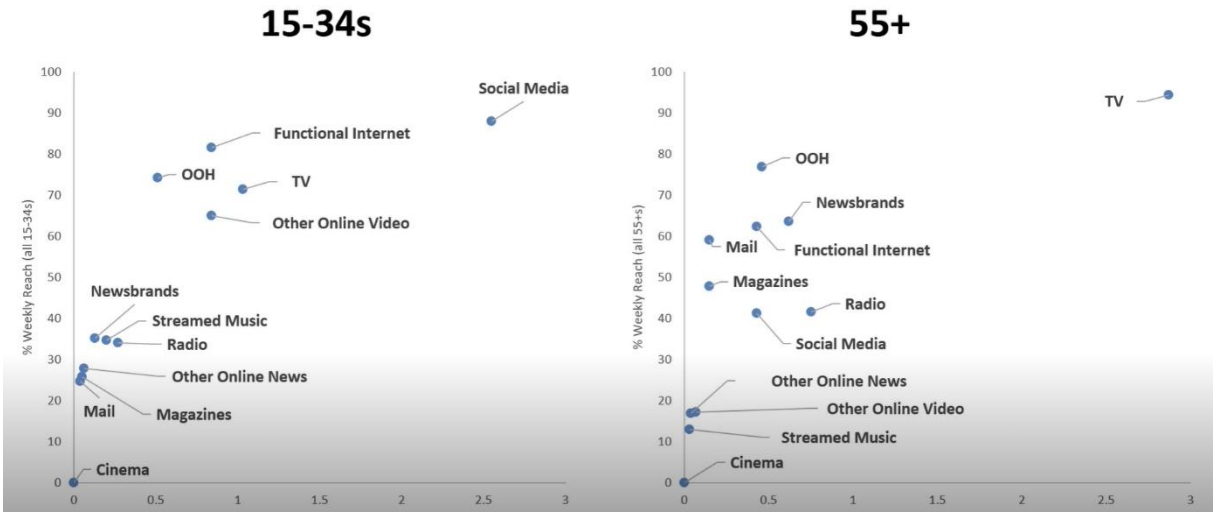
No longer can be employees motivated only financially, much more they are interested in the company values, its overall benefits for the whole society. According to Edelman Trust Barometer survey (2019), for employees is important how the company contributes to the improvement of the company, what are the company values, its mission and vision for future. (Edelman Trust Barometer 2019. Available at: https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2019-02/2019_Edelman_Trust_Barometer_Global_Report.pdf)

4. SOCIAL NETWORKS AS CUSTOMER SERVICE AND THE INFLUENCE OF INFLUENCERS

For a long period of time has been discussed the issue of social networks influence not only on PR but over whole marketing communication. Social networks have brought the brands new opportunities to hit the target group, but at the same time, they are becoming a powerful weapon in the hands of consumers, who are provided with space to express their opinion or experience with the brand via products and services:

- 55% of users want to receive response / feedback from brands via social networks,
- 45% of people spread their dissatisfaction or bad experience through social media (The Crowdfire Blog, September 2019. Available at: https://blog.crowdfireapp.com/)

Great role has been played by the influencers themselves. Whereas once consumers when choosing products or services followed the recommendations from acquaintances, later they started following the discussions and reviews on websites, and at present has been this choice influenced by the recommendations of influencers. It is also influenced by the fact that during the period of pandemic people are locked up at home, thus their time spent on social networks rises. It can be demonstrated by Les Binet´s chart (Group Head of Effectiveness adam & eve, who presented at the Digital Rulezz 2021 conference and talks about watching the media at the time of the lockdown in the UK:



The second reason is also distrust of traditional advertising, mentioned at the beginning of our paper. The new trend of brand communication in the online space leads to the situation, that the customers and employees of the brand themselves are becoming the brand influencers.

5. CONCLUSION

Recently, we have been witnessing two major crises: the financial crisis in 2008, and the COVID-19 crisis since 2020. Both have shown that brands with good reputation are the market winners. Even in times of limited consumption and limited movement, customers rely on brands, they trust them and are loyal to them. Let's take a lockdown example, when people can go only to the nearest shop to buy groceries, and they want to have this "necessity" behind as fast as possible, not to spend longer time among people. At that speed they automatically reach for brands they trust, and know and do not experiment with others. The brands themselves also adapt their communication to the crisis situation. Let us give an example: before the financial crisis, the attributes such as a family car for long family trips was the communication used by Nissan brand, but saving money and fuel was the communication during or shortly after the crisis. This is the way of communication market development not only during the period of pandemic, but also after its ending: people will look for brands that helped during the pandemic, whether were the brands in their attributes focused on help, solidarity, and in close connection with the environment. Environmental issues will more and more appear in brand communication, as it is an issue that inflects several levels of society. For example, Plzenský Prazdroj was the first to come up with beer in plastic bottles in 1999 what was used to communicate the uniqueness; but from 1.1.2020, plastic-bottled beer was cancelled, what is now declared as their environmental protection issue.

Three pillars of increasing brand identity and their reputation will be as follows:

- Brand authenticity – fulfilment of promises through various marketing communication channels
- Environmental issues, brand identification and attitudes with their implementation
- Ethical dimension - primarily in social network communication

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