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Horizon of Influence

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Abstract. The research explores the influence phenomenon as part of persuasion activity. It emphasizes that among the procedures of persuasion, the influencing activities are predominant. Results that attempts to influence certain target-groups and public opinion may be detected in all fields. It cannot be affirmed that someone is the main promoters of the undertakings of influence. However, it may be asserted that people has lost innocence a long time ago and for good, regarding the intentions of persuasive influence. The army and special services have lost their monopoly. Infuse of the persuasion has engaged on the market of influence with an outstanding force. Important parts of our opinions on social problems and daily expenditures are oriented by the social products funded by groups of interests operating by means of intermediaries.

Keywords: communication, persuasive communication, influence.

1. Introduction

Our attitudes and behaviours towards personalities, bodies, organisations and institutions are determined by the force of public relations engaged by them to produce, keep and enhance the image. The influencing activities are supported by the successes of economic and information stakes.

Decreasing costs of communications and accessing the computing era ensures a relatively easy access to media for the influence actions. The expansion of the press (increase of radio stations, TV channels, and imposition of the Internet) has enlarged the set of communication possibilities and influence capabilities. Those interested to influence engage in activities, directly or by means of intermediaries, but they always turn to specialists. Foundations, parties, associations, churches need support and assistance, they turn to influence. For influencing, means, procedures and methods inducing an attitude favourable to support and promote an opinion or an interest are used (Roustang, 1990; Laurens, 2005; Karlova & Fisher, 2013; Vlăduțescu & Ciupercă, 2013).

2. Stages and actors of influence

The activity of influence is structured on three stages: the source and the receiver, the message and the situation of influence. The main actor of influence is the agent of influence. E. Bakshy, J. M. Hofman, W. A. Mason & D. J. Watts (2011) underline “everyone is an influencer”. The latter must be a personality in the field where it is intended to induce an opinion, attitude, behaviour, must enjoy respect, have prestige, reliable and must have intellectual and cultural ascendancy. All these qualities shall enable them to have a good word, and the way of saying it must have the power of influence (Durandin, 1993; Bénesteau, 2003; Vlăduțescu, 2013a). When they are have no reputation, the influence agent can be a specialist with the power to take decisions: a journalist, a trade union leader, a leader of an economic or cultural institution, a politician, etc. The influence agents can also be writers and

cultured people. They openly operate under various covers. Their mandate is to disseminate ideas and diffuse opinions by means of which they would support theories and doctrines. They act to create and direct opinion currents, to determine attitudes and impose behaviours (Ferro, 1991; Géré, 2011; Dima & Vlăduțescu, 2012). The influence agents are not only found agents, but also created agents. For the latter, the action leaders work to create for them a prestige, an authority, fame, reputation, so that their views, opinions, attitudes and subsequent behaviours would become generators of influence. Such a case is that of the journalist Pierre Charles-Pathé. He has been assisted by the K.G.B. to publish a journal with a circulation of 500 copies and thus supported to become known and renown. A prestige and an authority have been created for him, so that the journal written together with the K.G.B. would be sought by deciding factors. At its circulation, the journal "Synthesis" had as subscribers 299 deputies, 139 senators, 41 journalists, 14 embassies and 7 other people (Wolton, 1997). As Thierry Wolton states, in "K.G.B. in France" (Wolton, 1997, pp. 280-286), Pathé wrote his publication himself, but the projects of the articles were however supervised by officers of the K.G.B. (also Bittman & Godson, 1985).

Among the made agents, there are some propagating messages of influence which have been impregnated to them by the situations they have been subject to. Impregnated agents do not even know they are agents, they get out from the typicality of the action by that they cannot be called honorary agents either. Such a case would be that of a renowned scholar to whom, left for a foreign country, invited there or going on his own a situation of impregnation is prepared and he reacts. The situation may consist in having presented to the local authorities, city personalities, walking on a carefully chosen route, so that exceptional places and events, museums, monuments, restaurants would be presented to him. The situation again also has to do with the treatment at the hotel and long meals, consistent presents and friendships displayed and promises of future invitations. In the second plan, he shall be told about the economic interests of an investor to an economic objective where the scholar's son works. Once returned home, he shall talk to his son and to

the others about the miracles he had seen, about the privileges he had enjoyed, about the interest to invest. He shall become the promoter of the investor idea at a small price and shall militate for that investment. It is possible that his son shall not be able to resist to his father's impregnation influence.

The purpose of the action is considered to be reached once the effects underlying the design and implementation of the action have been determined. The forms in which the influencing message is spread may be articles, books, conferences, interviews, generally interventions in press, on the radio and on TV and Internet, they can also be discussions, conversations, debates, controversies (Rothkopf, 1999; Ahmed, 2005; Verdon, 2010; Vlăduțescu, 2013b). The states themselves perform actions and operations of influence. France is a major manufacturer of wines, major manufacturer of very good wines. France and Great Britain are just a few tens of kilometres apart. A linking tunnel has been built between the two. However, the assortments of French wines displayed in British shops are surprisingly low in relation to wines originating from the USA or Australia. British population is influenced by means of wines to avoid France and stay in contact with the U.S.A. and Australia. The population is pushed towards the USA and Australia. British people are oriented and determined to be interested in Australia and the USA. British people do not pour wine into their glasses, but they pour influence. We are dealing with a state influence. The population of any country is oriented or determined by influence to admit, accept and adopt the government's position in a problem, it is pushed to obey the directives of the government. A French statesman J.-F. Tacheau shown that: "if I promote my values, I shall export my model of consumption and sell my products" (Apud Volkoff, 1999). Where a language is spoken, that language shall sell the products of the country where it is spoken. In his book "La France sous influence" (1997) (France under Influence) T. Wolton argues that by means of the French language, France is exposed to some undesired commercial influences. Under the conditions where the freedom of opinion and expression is a respected and guaranteed right, the use of this right

may turn into an abuse, under various forms of influence. The opinions expressed in performing certain actions of influence cannot be stopped, a wrongdoer cannot be found among them (Fetzer, 2004a; Fetzer, 2004b; Gackowski, 2006; Stahl, 2006; Vlăduțescu, 2013c).

That who would fight against influence by other means than by influencing would be exposed to accusations of calumny or defamation. They do not pose the problem of opinion, attitude and feelings of congeners (Carter, 2014). However, at the moment when a majority opinion curdles, it becomes representative for the group. If the opinion has as object groups in conflict, it shall be a criterion for the formation of groups which can be in the position to support one or another of the groups, in the position to disavow the other group or outside taking any attitude. The numerical reduction of the group without opinion and antagonistic reinforcement shall be the indication of an action of influence. At the level of individuals in the groups delimited by influence, in the case of establishing some strong opinions, an unconditional rejection of the other group's opinion is manifested as indications of influence. The critical sense of the groups' components is anesthetised by influence. Moreover, they are automatically inoculated with the desire to be supplied with information confirming the already established opinion. The components of the groups shall come to refuse to be exposed to the messages of the adverse group. The refusal shall be an indication for the influence internalisation. Any other opinion shall be rejected in the places where an opinion has been introduced by influence. Once fixed on the inside, the external opinion shall first act for rejecting any counter-argumentation message. Subsequently, the influenced one shall become themselves the propagator of the induced opinion, by making a target of influencing of their own circle of relationships.

In most cases, persuasive influences are inserted in sections of positive influence. Major operations and information campaigns of trusts also have underlying actions of influence. Against some ideations which are not necessarily

harmful, persuasive inferences are created. For example, publicity relies on influence. In its critical messages, in its civilising messages, there are always reserves of persuasive significations of influence, which are well camouflaged, dissimulated and simulated.

As an example of media influence, the operation to create a negative attitude towards Iraq in the so-called Gulf War is usually given. After the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq, the Western public opinion was exposed to a single source of information. The Western media pronounced to be in favour of a military action against Saddam Hussein. This attitude was induced to the public opinion, because the media refused to also transmit the motivation of the leadership in Baghdad (Lewandowsky, Stritzke, Freund, Oberauer & Krueger, 2013). Should Saddam have been allowed to access the media in order to expose the reasons of invasion, the American response would not have enjoyed the unanimous international support. The West has decided against Iraq without exactly knowing the Iraqi motivations of invasion. The media has selected the negative aspects of the Iraqi campaign and presented them as being the only ones. By influence, Saddam Hussein was isolated from the media, and not only the military defeat of Iraq started from here, but also its intellectual-historical defeat. Iraq was removed from Kuwait without having succeeded to explain the reasons and grounds of the invasion (Raven, 1964; Turner, 1991; Cialdini, 2001; Gass & Seiter, 2011; Vlăduțescu, 2013d).

The state influences, the media influences, the seller, the priest and the teacher influence. Influence is everywhere, because man himself is an exponent of an influence. Culture and civilisation are lessons of influence, but the antisocial manifestations, violence and crime are also exercises of influence. We must only fear the persuasive influence. We must fight persuasion, which applies to influence. The first step to fight it is to protect ourselves from it, and for this we have only one solution (Kotter, 2010; Cohen & Bradford, 2011; Vlăduțescu, 2014b). To defend ourselves, we must know it.

3. Conclusion

There are indices and indicators to detect the activities that fall within the protocol of performing the actions of influence. Underlining the indices may be done only under the conditions of previously knowing various types of indices. Whichever they would be, independent of any influence, each individual irrepressibly creates an opinion about some event. Detaching a leader within a crowd leads to creating groups which, by differentiation and awareness of a new identity shall reach a conflict. In the absence of the leader, people operate in relation to their own interests.

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