UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

COMMUNICATION IN IMAGE BUILDING

IN THE EXPERIENCE INDUSTRY

CASE STUDY: STAR BOWLING PLANET AB

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ABSTRACT

The Experience industry is a relatively new word given to the new trend of living that has developed whereby, many more people in the world have begun shifting their expenditure to goods and activities that they can derive memorable experiences and pleasure from. Being a very new industry, with the word 'Experience industry', first mentioned in 1990 not much has been done in relation to the functioning and especially image building in this industry.

The research thus focuses on how companies in the experience industry use communication to build and maintain a good image as compared to other ordinary industries. A qualitative interview method has been used through a Case Study – Star Bowling Planet AB.

The empirical findings reveal that Star Bowling does not do as much communication geared towards image building as companies in the ordinary industries. They rely basically on the quality of their services and advertising on the media to get the customers they need. Even with this, sales is on the rise and the customers seem to be indifferent about the image of the company and will return to Star Bowling even if they find other places that offer the same services.

The findings thus reveal that this company in the experience industry do not need to do as much communication geared towards image building as ordinary manufacturing or service industries do to remain in the market.

Key Words: Experience industry, image building, communication, Ordinary companies

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

On February 5th 2010, The President of Toyota Motors apologized to the entire public and especially Toyota customers for the noticeably poor quality of cars it has put out lately. His apology came after over eight million cars were recalled for quality control from November 2009 basically because of problems with accelerators and brakes. Toyota's top selling hybrid, Prius, was recalled for brake problems just days after the apology. The President of Toyota Motors, Japans largest car manufacturer which has enjoyed a good reputation till now, promised users that the inspection process will be strengthened and made faster while the company will seek outside experts to help solve the quality problems. Toyota had admitted to quality faults in November and had recalled some cars from consumers and the recent apology made by the President, was the most extensive statement made by the company since the recall. According to statistics from Reuters (News agency), Toyota which lost $30 billion or one fifth of its market value in January and suffered from drastic fall in company shares, has since seen a rise of about 4.1 percent to $74.73 on the New York Stock Exchange. The company is gradually regaining shape and has based a lot of its campaigns on road safety while improving on quality-all work to maintain a good image. On May 25th 2010, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety awarded three of Toyotas three new hybrids including the 2011 Toyota Avalon and 2011 Toyota Sienna the institute's highest ratings in road safety.

Toyota's boss came out plain with the public to accept responsibility for and hopefully to use proper communication to solve the troubled car manufacturer's image problem. Despite the recall of the cars, stocks were dropping steadily and a simple apology or direct communication from the President of the company to the stakeholders and efforts to keep a good image alive was able to set the company on the right stage again even though not very steadily. Bernstein (1984) is of the opinion that most company failures result from the refusal to communicate with the stakeholders on the basic information they should know about. The bad opinions or misinterpretation of a company's activities and functioning are totally the fault of the company. Thus the image that stakeholders make of companies is actually what the companies have designed for themselves.

An image is a perception of how the person or stakeholder views and reacts towards the company. It is powerful enough to push a person to either buy a company's product or neglect it and even affects the recommendations (word of mouth communication) the person will make to others about the company's products. While the image is not just build from the quality of goods and services offered by the company, the frequency and quality of communication becomes really important since image is not necessarily reality but just a perception of the reality. According to Bernstein (2004), the first impression that companies create in the minds of stakeholders is even more important than the effort they make to uphold their reputation. This is because; human rationality does not permit people to make drastic changes in opinions even though these opinions and perceptions can be altered with the right communication strategies. Thus, companies that are proactive tend to be more successful at maintaining a good image than those which are reactive. Van Riel (1995, in Hooghiemstra, 2000) sees image as a set of meanings by which an object is known, and determines what people think, describe, relate or remember the thing. Hence corporate image is people's perception of a company which is a result of the information spread via mass media. According to Hooghiemstra, corporate image is the same as corporate reputation and this has become so important that all companies are spending more and more money to get the public to like them and see them as an important part of the society. Portraying a bad image to the stakeholders may totally destroy a company and push it out of existence.
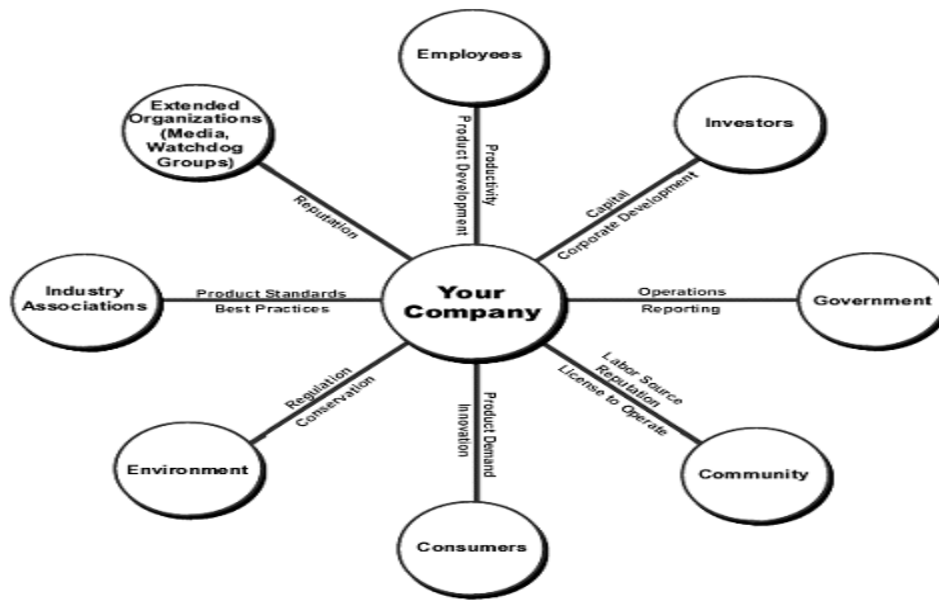
Figure 1. Company's stakeholders or publics, BL3 Strategies, LLC, 2008

More and more production companies want to be linked with the effort to preserve the environment and or fight pollution created by their own activities. Manufacturing companies want to be identified with campaigns for more children to go to school and get educated, proper health care for all, they give the impression that the stakeholders opinions on their activities is paramount and even engage company resources in leisure activities where people can get good memories that will stay with them for a long time. Call-in service workers are more and more expected to hold their emotions and maintain politeness while talking to clients, employees are portrayed as happy where they are, delivery services are being improved upon and companies want to be known to be there when needed etc. Above all, all companies want to be known for the best quality in the market.

Rajshekhar et al (1994) posit that the fact that companies are spending more and more of their resources to get a good image is enough reason to believe that without a good image, the life span of the company could be limited. The image or perception people have of a company will affect how they react to new products from the company, Brown & Dacin (1997). Kam (2008) thinks that a good company image will help companies hit fewer roadblocks as they are better

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able to get the right talents to work with, attract shareholders or business partners, keep government regulation at the favour of the company, increase sales by making a strong brand, encourage consumer loyalty and stand as a buffer on the image and the sales of the company in times of crises. Deelmann & Loos (2002) see a company's reputation as the best means to build trust in the consumers so as to gradually get them to stay loyal to the product. This is particularly true for E-business where trust has a very high consideration on consumers.

1.2 COMMUNICATION AND COMPANY IMAGE

Rajshekhar et al (1994) pick out communication as the best means through which companies can make this image and maintain it. Consumers use several different sources of information to form their impressions about a company. Because of such diversity, companies need to always be on the alert as to the right medium to use and the best things to do. Rajshekhar et al (1994) discuss sponsorship as a means of boosting company image. Increasingly, companies want to write their names as sponsors of some important activities, especially social activities that benefit human beings and lead to development as a means of making themselves look good before their stakeholders.

Apart from social sponsorship, Rajshekhar et al (1994) cite the mass media as one of the most effective ways of communicating image. Argenti (1994, in Hooghiemstra, 2000) sees the mass media as the main means of communicating with a company's publics. Given that the media especially the television and radio has tremendous effect on audiences as proven by the Big Bang theory (communication theory that proves that purports that the media especially radio and television is all powerful and has tremendous effect on its audience), it has become naturally the most accessible way of getting to all the stakeholders of the company at the same time. Bernstein (1984) makes a list of means through which companies form an image and he mentions that all strategies fall within the bounds of the public relations work of the company and include advertising, the literature or words used in advertising , sponsorship etc.

However, most research on image building has been focused on industries in general without specifications. Reading through the lines reveal that most writers have focused on image formation in the production and service industries while very little has been done on the experience industry since it is relatively new.

The production and service industries have existed since the creation of man. Standing as a symbol where tangible goods and services are produced, and where several individuals have got the freedom to get into business and compete, there has actually grown the need to create and maintain a good image before the stakeholders. While these two types of economies are actually known to involve all kinds of industries existing since all companies either extract and manufacture tangible goods or give out intangible services to its customers. Given new trends that have developed over time, there has been a break-off from the usual trend called the experience industry.

1.3 EXPERIENCE INDUSTRY

The tourism sector began growing rapidly after the Second World War leading Murphy (1985) to the conclusion that tourism and the experiences and commercial value surrounding it may gradually grow into a full industry with its own name. But the term 'experience industry' was actually first used in 1990 and has since left researchers and academics busy. Berit (2009) traces the origin of the term and its concept as coming from the radical changes in consumption patterns that started in the 1960's geared towards pleasure. The experience industry represents a new form of production geared towards symbolism and aesthetic value with such values based on individual opinions of them. This industry basically offers pleasure and fun to its consumers and more and more, people want to be able to identify themselves with specific pleasure spots. Berit (2009) thinks that choices in the experience industry are based on identity (how people will like to portray themselves) with the end result of each experience being pleasure, happiness and motivation comes from just doing it for the sake of personal satisfaction and for its own sake. Social reputation seems to play a role in what people want to do and in the choices they pick in the experience industry. Being able to identify themselves with some activities and maybe social

class that comes with it is a reason for choosing some pleasure areas. Thus choice here is based on personal taste, uniqueness and experience; this explains why a restaurant that is believed to produce very bad quality food by others keeps selling since to some others, the food may taste better than everywhere else or better still, a restaurant that does not produce good food may still succeed in attracting consumers based on the experience they attach to their services. In their master's thesis, Jugård & Modig (2009) acknowledge that, consumers are looking for experience more and more since its gives self satisfaction and arouses the emotions.

Other economic activities like the demand for goods and services are external to the buyer but the experience is personal because it engages the consumer on an emotional, physical, intellectual and even spiritual level. This explains why no two people can have the same experience because it only exists in the mind and it could also hint to the fact that people will go back to any place that satisfies them in all the above factors no matter the image that the service-giver has. Pine & Gilmore (1998).

According to Smrcka (2006) the experience industry is on the rise and brings together creative production, technology and the commercial economy to the creation of innovative products for experiences to the population. This industry offers goods and services in ways that permit consumers to create experiences which are usually geared towards surpassing oneself, achieving success, individuality and the choice of the experience is based on a consumers definition of satisfaction and a good experience. Smrcka sites tourism, fashion, music, the media, art and design as the main entities that make up the experience industry in Sweden. Consumers are looking for real places where they can catch fun and ease-off the stress of working very hard or the problems in their private lives. The larger definition of the experience industry has actually grown to include cultural attractions, restaurants, all kinds of clubs (night, bowling, sports clubs etc), amusement parks and all types of activities that are done for the fun and the pleasure that is derived from it.

1.3.1 EXPERIENCE INDUSTRY OR ECONOMY?

Significant trends began to force themselves into the economic world over two hundred years ago when the mass extraction of commodities began and took over the basics of the economy at the time. This period came to be termed the Agrarian economy. This gradually moved into the industrial revolution where the world changed into the manufacture of goods. Mass production became popular during this period with the creation of machines to aid the manufacturing process. With time, economist began to talk about the industrial economy where lives were based on the manufacturing industry and where the extracted commodities were now used in the production of goods. The change gradually grew into the production of intangible goods known as services to crown what has been till recently called the service economy. Gilmore (2003). The service sector became more popular over time and the value of most business establishments were based on the quality of services offered to the consumers. Service industries also became popular over time and dominated the economic world for a long time.

Due to the rise in the number of manufacturing and service businesses, competition set in and business people began to realize they needed more than just the goods and services to survive in the increasingly globalised market. Sundbo & Darmer (2008) thinks the concept of Experience actually started thanks to the works of Gerhard Schulze (The Experience Society-1992) and Pine & Gilmore (The Experience Economy-1999). Pine & Gilmore (1998) posit that the process of differentiation just boiled down to the creation of experiences that will be memorable, making people to leave each arena with beautiful memories. Companies moved from just selling goods and services to offering their consumers experiences with these goods. Tangible goods and services have gradually been packaged in a web of experiences such that people no longer just buy the goods that come with it, but the supplementary experience they derive from it. According to Pine & Gilmore (1998), experiences have gradually dominated the economy to the extent that people are prepared to pay more for a piece of chicken if it is offered in a restaurant where services like music and other entertainment exists. Here consumers pay for the time they spend with the producer of the experience and not for the value of goods and services. Gilmore (2003) believes that the need for an experience has dominated the economy to the extent that the service economy has finally been drowned by the world which is now living in an experience

economy where people want products that come to them in a stress-relieving way and are prepared to pay more for it.

Agrarian economy ⟹ Industrial economy ⟹ Service Economy ⟹ Experience Economy

Figure 2. Evolution of the economy, Zencha Lily, 2010

However, what the world is experiencing today is a shift from other forms of the economy to an experience dominated world. This does not in any way mean that the manufacturing or service industries or economies have disappeared. On the contrary, the experience economy has been made possible thanks to the presence of the service and manufacturing businesses. This brings us down to the fact that the use of the word 'Economy' is just representative of a historical space or a culture that has become dominant at a point in time and is not representative of the industries that make up the economy. Here 'economy' signifies the main activity that is dominating the commercial world at a given point in time.

According to <wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn>, an industry is the people or companies engaged in a particular kind of commercial enterprise. The Wikipedia divides industries into four main sectors notably the raw material extraction sector such as farming and mining, the secondary sector or the refinery and manufacturing, the tertiary sector which deals with services or intangible goods and the distribution. Since the experience economy is made up of some defined establishment like tourism, restaurants and catering, clubs and fun parks etc, which make use of all or some of the sectors involved in normal industrial production, it is practically correct to call it the 'experience industry'.

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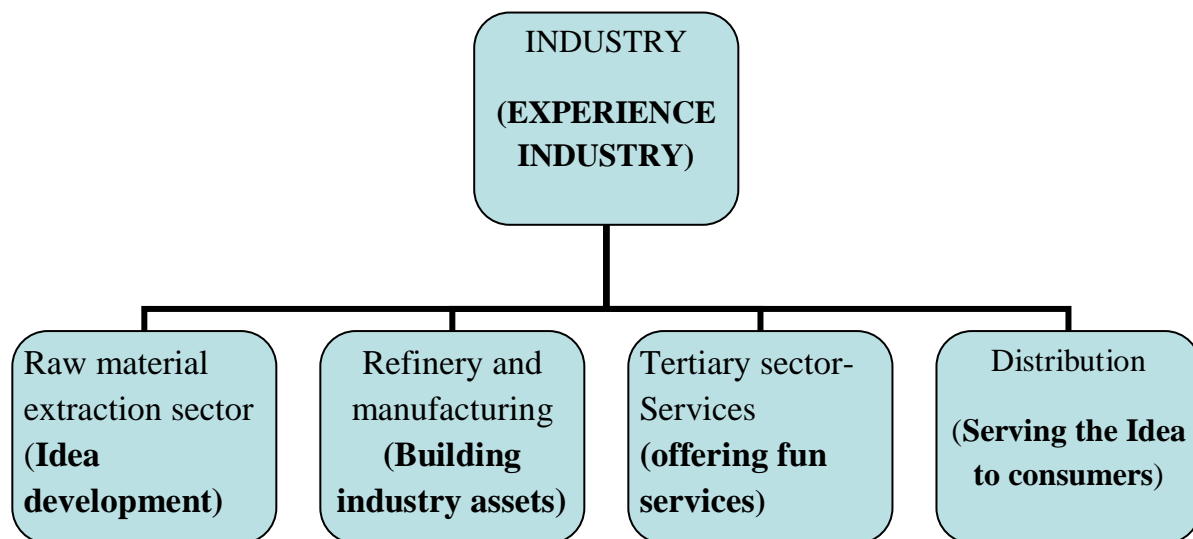
Figure 3. Experience as an industry with industrial sectors, Zencha Lily, 2010

In an experience industry like the tourism industry, the primary production process or raw material extraction will be the culmination of ideas and good areas for offer to tourist. Then there could be the manufacturing where the chosen spots are perfected to suit required standards and hotels are built to lodge potential customers. It involves all the construction and assets put in place to satisfy the tourist. The tertiary sector includes all forms of services that are offered to the tourist be it as part of the experience or the action undertaken to welcome and make them feel comfortable. The process ends with distribution which permits the tourist to take total control of the available resources to create his/her personal experience.

However, since some manufacturing industries have began making experiences part of their offers, there is a difficulty in separating it from other industries. Now car manufacturers want to win the market based on the amount of entertainment facilities they can bring into a car, and they spend money on exhibitions where there are sports activities to prove the strength of the cars and so forth, thus making the purchase of cars an experience and not just a usual demand. Thus the

new craze to bring a new experience in the services offered by all industries is enough to confirm that the world is actually living in an 'experience economy' right now where commercial activities are crowned with the introduction of services.

But the experience industry still exist based on the specific business establishments and sector that offers basically experience, entertainment and pleasure to the population. Hence, for the sake of the research, we shall refer to the *experience industry* which is actually the companies in this sector involved in offering just experiences where people pay for the ideas that have been developed to offer them pleasure and good experiences.

1.4. PROBLEM STATEMENT

I have discussed just how important a good image can mean to a company and what companies have been involved in just to make sure they form and maintain a good image for themselves. Communication or at least proper communication has been identified as the most important means of forming this image or reputation. Being like every other kind of industry (manufacturing and service), the experience industry should definitely operate under the same kind of pressure that other industries operate. That is to say, it is expected that they will face competition from the globalizing world market, have the same kind of need for a good image or reputation as other industries and thus the need to communicate in order to create, maintain and safe face.

However, on July 9th 2003, 52-year-old Rosa Donaldson was killed at the Six flags amusement park in New Orleans after being struck by spinning cars on the Joker's Jukebox ride. According to Butler Elisabeth of the New Orleans City Business publication, Donaldson was standing inside the ride arena when the ride started. It took the amusement park authorities more than a week to issue a statement. But till the emergence of hurricane Katrina years later which destroyed the Six flags New Orleans, the park continued to function like nothing had happened.

In his master's in Public relations thesis, Costal (2001) also mentions the death of a father of three on New Year's Eve at Disney. The accident happened when a steel mooring

Shaft flung loose of Anaheim Disneyland's USS Columbia and struck Luan Dawson in the head. A Disney worker also suffered severe injuries from the same accident. Even though Disney was accused of trying to wipe off evidence by scrubbing away the place where the accident took place before the arrival of the police, Disney has not lost any customers and continues to be leaders in amusement park operation in the USA.

Both stories contrast sharply with that of Toyota mentioned earlier that has its image shaking due to technical faults on its cars. The quick move to communicate and apologize for the fault and the step to take responsibility by recalling the cars seems to be helping the company stay afloat even though very slowly. This presents an apparent difference in the use of communication in image building between manufacturing and the experience industries. Being a very new industry, image in the experience industry has not yet been explored or researched. Even though much has been written about the experience economy since its prominence in 1990, there has been nothing written about its use of communication in image building. This can however be explained by the fact that this industry is relatively new. The aim of this study is find out:

If image building is as present and important in the Experience industry as it is in ordinary manufacturing and service industries.

To fulfil the aim of the study, i shall be searching for an answer to the following research question

How do companies in the experience industry use communication in image building as compared to other ordinary manufacturing and service industries?

This is based on the assumption as seen above and will be proven in the literature that while production companies focus resources and communicate often in order to build a good image as a means to keep its stakeholders, the experience industry may not really need as much of the image campaign since its stakeholders are more interested in emotional fulfillment, pleasure and personal taste. This means that they count may more on the emotional satisfaction of the clients than on the image of the industry. Much of the work on the building of images has focused on all

production companies and the experience industry being one of them may need a good image to survive in the competitive market. But placed in the confusion of individual gratification taking the upper hand on where people want to spend their time and choose what activities they want to get involved in, do these companies still realize the need for using communication to create a good reputation and do they spend as much as other companies in achieving this reputation.

In order to properly explore this question, I will have to answer a series of sub-questions:

1a. How much communication do companies in the experience industry do in order to stay afloat and keep the business going?

1b. Does a good image matter to the companies in the experience industry as it does to other industries

1c. Are there any differences in the communication channels used by the corporations to sell their image to their stakeholders?

All Production industries seem to have succeeded by using the mass media, quality and other forms of corporate sponsorship or pseudo events. Does the experience industry fit into this same means of communication or do they need other forms of communication other than the communicative methods used by ordinary industries in order to sell themselves. This will also include if this industry find as much need to communicate as other industries do.

1d. Which different activities do companies in the experience industry carry out to remain competitive in the market? Since the range of activities that are involved in this industry are increasing by the day and people are having fun based on what satisfy their specific taste, social class and uniqueness, do companies within the experience industry need to carry out any forms of extra activities in order to stay competitive. This will include their hold on crises within their organizations and consumer satisfaction.

Since the study aims at finding out about the less explored area of image building in the Experience industry, I will base my conclusions of the manufacturing industry on existing research/literature since a lot of research has been done in the field already. As for the Experience industry, I have decided to work with a case study which is a restaurant that offers opportunity for further pleasure through it numerous games. I will use StarBowling

Planet AB as the case study for this research. Since there are no studies on image building in the experience industry yet, the case study will permit me go into the indebt functioning of the experience industry by studying one place thoroughly. By doing an in dept study of one company in this industry, I hope to paint a picture of how communication is used in image building in the experience industry, find out their use of communication in the building of company image and finally spark research in this fields.

1.5.1 STAR BOWLING PLANET

What is known today as Star Bowling started as a little bowling alley in 2006 occupying the first floor at Odingsgatan 8 in Gothenburg. The services then included bowling and a restaurant where people could dine and have fun afterwards. By October 2009, the second floor was opened to give the club more space to run other activities like parties, conferences, race room, shooting, golf, slotcar track, dart, rodeo, basket, air hockey, fire camp, screens to watch sporting activities like football etc. With its range of activities increasing to meet increased competition and attract more customers, the club has plans to open a bigger conference room within 2010. With these improvements, the marketing service says the company is working to make the place a world of memorable experiences.

1.6 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Image building: This is the effort put in by a company usually through effective communication to ensure a good reputation or a good name for the company.

Corporate image: This is the picture or impression people have of a company. This is usually a result of how much communication and how much people know of the company.

Manufacturing industry: It refers to industries involved in the production of tangible goods and services and in involves in the creation of value addition.

Service industry: This is the provision of services to consumers. This does not include tangible goods.

Experience industry: Wrongly referred to as the experience economy, it is the bringing together of creative production, technology and the commercial economy in order to offer more pleasure and fun to the increasingly pleasure seeking economy. Creative leisure offers people the opportunity to develop personal experiences. This includes touristic centers, restaurants, night and bowling clubs, fun parks and so much more.

Experience economy: This is a new trend in the economy where economic activities have gradually shifted to the creation and consumption of memorable and pleasurable experiences.

Social sponsorship: Social sponsorship as the corporate social support of causes by a firm usually used as a promotional tool with the aim of maintaining a good reputation with stakeholders. This could include sponsorship of social activities and philanthropic works-Simmons, C. J. & Becker-Olsen. (2006).

Corporate Communication: Corporate communication is a means of which all forms of communication are used effectively and efficiently to create a favourable basis for relationship with a company's stakeholders. Van Riel (1995) In Hooghiemstra (2000)

Stakeholders: This is a group or organization that can affect or be affected by the actions and decisions of the organizations and make up the company's interest group. These could include shareholders, customers, business partners, government, employees, immediate environment etc.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, i shall be looking at existing literature on image building and maintenance in the ordinary manufacturing and service industries. The different means of communication in these companies will later be used as parameters to measure communication and image building in an experience company. The headings in this chapter will be taken from the main criteria advanced by the authors.

2.1 COMMUNICATION AND IMAGE BUILDING

One time Chief Executive Officer of Strauss Levi Jeans, Robert Haas, once told the corporate communications department of the company that there is only one client which the company has, and that is its reputation. Manufacturing and service companies have gradually come to the realization that the image of the company could be its greatest assets.

According to McDonald (1991) very few companies have actually conducted any research to find out the impact of a good image on its sales but most companies are still holding to the opinion that their survival in the market depends on what the stakeholders perceive of them. However, given the increase in competition in most local and international markets, companies are working hard to maintain a good image in the minds of their stakeholders in order to keep their customers, attract and keep shareholders, attract outstanding employees, gain competitive advantage, look beneficial in the immediate environment in which they find themselves, gain government approval and favours etc.

Preece et al (1995) site advertising, consumer marketing campaigns, mission statements and social sponsorship as the main means used by firms to promote their image or reputation. Along with these factors there must be the use of proper communication. Communicating a company's activities is the only means of bonding with the stakeholders and getting them to see the company as management would like them to. Failure to communicate may spell speculation, leave the public with no knowledge of what to expect of the offers made by the company and may gradually lead to its failure.

2.2 POWER OF THE MEDIA

Grey & Balmer (1998) presents the media as the greatest threat to all works done by a company to get a positive picture. According to them, companies need to work hand in glove with the media in order to communicate their activities and gain the Medias approval. While other actions like good product quality could communicate a good name on its own, companies need to communicate their social sponsorship activities, their financial statements and their plans of action in order to get favourable ratings from the stakeholders.

An example of a company that has suffered from bad media report in the USA is TEXACO which came under fire following publicity of the criticisms from blacks. Meanwhile Kingston Technology, a producer of memory chips, got an alarming increase in sales due to media publicity following a 100 million dollar Christmas bonus to over 500 of its workers.

If companies work hard to protect this image, they keep a positive picture in the minds of their publics at the mention of the company's name. Since the stakeholders of each company are diverse, they usually have to work hard to satisfy the demands of all the public's like the government, shareholders, consumers, immediate environment, etc

Grey & Balmer (1998) reveals that due to the reputation held by the financial services likes banks in the UK; the parliament has consistently passed legislations to suit them since they are identified with their efforts towards building societies.

Nakra (2000) notes that the growing liberalization of the world markets and the presence of new technology has brought an influx of information to the public. Within this confusion, it is necessary for the companies to stand out distinct and appeal to the customers in ways that will make them notice the industry through their uniqueness in communication which will bring attachment to their brand.

Nakra is of the opinion that the internet is becoming the most effective means of reaching out to a company's stakeholders since a lot of information can be displayed at the same time and there are opportunities for profitable financial transactions.

In a study published by the Wall Street Journal on the 30 most reputable companies based on the reputation quotients, several factors were taken into consideration. These included the emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, social responsibility, workplace environment and financial performance, Alsop (1999, in Nakra Prema, 2000). However, in order for companies to secure this reputation, they must be able to communicate a reputation that ignites all the above factors at the mention of their name. Without proper communication using the right channels, companies cannot create an emotional appeal; get the stakeholders to recognize their vision and good leadership, its social responsibility, financial performance etc. and as already seen, the media is the ideal means to effect all the communication.

Ashbaugh et al (1999) support Nakra's choice of the internet as the best means of communication. In their research, they asked managers of companies why they have decided to set up websites to publish information about their firms. The popular response was that there is a lot of information that is being demanded by stakeholders and the internet is the best channel to contain so much information. This includes the financial reports, annual reports and information on the products and activities of the companies. A look through the websites of some car manufacturing industries can confirm the large bulk of information. On <www.Renault.com> and <www.toyota.com> there is evidence of their urge to appear likeable to the public. There are copies of their annual reports which are being updated in February every year, news on their activities, pictures of their products and happy employees, press releases, information about the core values of the companies, philanthropic works, environmental protection activities (since car manufacturing activities can lead to a lot of pollution), their work to keep close ties with shareholders etc. While this makes the internet a useful channel for information flow from producers to consumers, it also goes a long way to show that companies realize the need to communicate these activities.

Due to the increasing technology, companies are better able to communicate to their stakeholders through the annual reports. These reports include a summary of the company's activities and usually its financial transactions for an entire year. Several companies have made it a duty to address information of their yearly activities to their shareholders at the end of the month and also giving opportunities for the general public to have a look. This helps to bring the stakeholders closer to the company since they get to know and understand what decisions they

made during each year and the efforts that companies make to keep the consumers and other stakeholders satisfied. Most annual reports include the financial statement for the entire year and audit reports, the leadership style, new products or if there are any improvements, employee bonuses, marketing style, successes and cost, partnerships, prospects for a new year etc. This all helps to communicate the larger picture of the company to stakeholders. The more people know, the better acquainted they are to the company.

Bernstein (1984) thinks that low profile companies that are notorious for being passive, uninvolved, avoidant and un-influential, get this poor image from their inability to communicate its works or participate in social activities that involve the public. He explains the choice to keep a low profile as stemming from the risk of communicating poorly. However, poor communication only serves to sever ties between a company and its stakeholders but the lack of it could mean a total absence.

2.3 COMMUNICATING THROUH A COMPANIES IDENTITY

While explaining that every move made by a company is significant, be it the way telephone calls are answered or the company's involvement in community projects, Grey & Balmer (1998) posit that even the names of the companies is enough to communicate its goals and may even determine the rate of sales and how competitive a firm can get in the market. This was exemplified in the mid 1980's when American Stores acquired a Californian chain, Sav-on drugs and changed its name to OSCO SAV-ON with the intention of dropping the name Sav-on in the future. In a very short time, their product sales began to wane given that the word 'OSCO' is pronounced in Spanish as 'ASCO' which means *'sickening'*. A more successful case is that of the UK firm, the WOOLWORTH GROUP which after facing a bad image due to scandals caused by its retail stores, changed its name to KINGFISHER in order to communicate the large size of its operations and to distance itself from the previous poor image. The new name alongside a change in the communication strategy that included putting the new brand name Kingfisher on all communications with investors, the city and financial media while still operating its retail stores under various brand names helped to increase the sales of the company and get it a winning image before the public.

Hoogiemstra (2000) looks at the image of a company through the Legitimacy theory. According to this theory, the survival of a company is dependent on the extent to which the company operates within the bounds of the society. This means that companies that do not seem to affect their immediate publics in a positive manner may be set to leave the market sooner than later. Given the fact that norms of society are gradually changing, companies need to depend on corporate reporting (communication of its activities) to prove that they are changing with the changing environment. Corporate reporting in this case will have to be geared towards self-laudatory which will show the stakeholders what the firm is doing for the environment like reducing pollution, maintaining quality, sponsoring events close to the hearts of the people etc. A company that creates an Identity like one that has the immediate society at heart would definitely enjoy a good image.

To properly communicate this image, there must be use of proper language to echo the positive work being done by the firm. Because the Big Bang theory has been tested and has proven that the media still has a lot of impact on the public, Hoogiemstra (2000) advices the use of the media and annual reports by firms as the best means to communicate their personality. When a company fails to tell the stakeholders what benefit their existence is to the environment, this lack of communication may give the impression of passiveness and thus a bad image for companies that may be working hard for the environment.

Partnerships made by a company go a long way to affect how the company is viewed by its stakeholders. Since the stakeholders are the judges of which partners companies should affiliate with, a partnership with a firm or organization that is not found fit or which is suffering from a bad reputation may communicate a bad image for the acquiring company as well. Simmons & Becker-Olsen. (2006) talks of what is considered a natural fit and low fit for companies who are trying to partner with other companies. This means the congruence in business lines and reputation as seen by the eyes of the public. The lower the congruence then the lower the fit that both companies have but when the congruence is considered to be high, then there is what is called a natural fit. They reveal that communication can be used to turn the low fit companies to advantages in some respect but without it, it will naturally lead to a bad image for the acquiring

company. Preece et al (1995) in their work on how Levi Strauss worked on image building reveals that the company made efforts to ally with reputable companies only. During their expansion into other parts of the world, they took a lot into consideration before choosing a local partner. Levi equally worked on its partnerships with companies known for a poor image especially on human rights to comply before any partnership deal is signed. For example, during an expansion programme in Bangladesh, it was realized that the firm that Levi was interested in getting into partnership had a long history of employing underage children usually about 14 years old. Asking the company to fire the children would have caused uproar in the immediate environment and could cause Levi to lose its sales in the area since these children supported their families from the money they made. To save the company's reputation, Levi decided to send these children to school while still paying them as though they were working with the firm. This was all done to save the company the bad image of identifying itself with a company that is low on human rights.

The choice of partnerships here will also include the growing trend of using a celebrity to do advertising or act as spokes-person for a company. According to Clinton (2008), about 25% of advertisements in the USA employ celebrities since it has been recognized that sales increase based on the celebrity's credibility, likeability, trustworthiness, celebrity/product fit, expertise and physical attractiveness. Celebrities add value to a company's products but just like all other partners, the bad image of a celebrity can communicate a wrong image for a company as well. Clinton reveals that when a celebrity gets bad reports through media scrutiny or gradually gets noted for the wrong image, this may do damage to an endorsing companies reputation and thus its sales. Thus for companies to protect their image, there is the need to choose celebrities that communicate the right reputation for the company while at the same time meeting other requirement like attractiveness, likeability, celebrity/product fit etc.

In order to get a good hold on the market, companies are obliged to offer prompt and good services to the consumers and even to retail outlets that distribute the company's goods. Proper and prompt service gives the image of a company that is serious, cares about its customers and retailers and will get the stakeholders to keep running back when they need first class services. This explains why companies want to write politeness to customers as part of their high points. While this gets the retailers and consumers to keep coming back, it also encourages word of

mouth communication which will help the company get a better image and win over more people. Preece et al (1995) write that Levi succeeded in the fast growing and competitive jeans market thanks to the services it offered the retailers. Retailers were treated with care, respect, politeness and served promptly such that most of them kept coming back due to these services. This created an image of reliability which retailers obviously wanted to work with in order to make money for their own retail outlets. Thus proper service to the retailers and consumers is an important way of communicating a good image for companies. This also goes to prove the fact that quality is one of the best ways of communicating to a company's stakeholders.

2.4 COMMUNICATING SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Stephen & Stephen (2004), finds a positive relationship between corporate philanthropy, sponsorship and the reputation of the company. Even though this seems to stand as independent action, the use of sponsorship by companies is an easy way to communicate the company's involvement in things that are of importance to the population. This is because social performance increases the identification of the company and informs the stakeholders of what they will consider the core values of the corporation.

According McDonald, C. (1991), some companies carry out sponsorship with a vague meaning as to what they are doing and thus do not make the effort to do any form of publicity after it. This reveals that when sponsorship is done without adequate communication on what the firm is actually doing or what its intentions are, this could still end up a failure. He notes that due to the lack of passion to follow up social sponsorships and communicate it effectively, some companies have resorted to the sponsorship of television programmes since it speaks for itself and need no further communication. He advises that sponsorship deals should be long term in order to create expected results and they should be properly thought of before executing.

Simmons & Becker-Olsen. (2006) posit that 80% of respondents in a national survey agree that corporate sponsorship creates a better image for the firm. They are able to prove that companies can turn the low fit with their sponsored course to the advantage of the firm through proper, consistent and extensive communication that explains the reason for their choice of sponsorship.

Companies can easily secure a good name for themselves through the use of such sponsorship and philanthropy. This is based on the notion that even if philanthropy does not affect an

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individual directly, there is joy to watch other people being supported by the company. It is in short, one of the easiest ways to a good name and could account for a change in the perception that stakeholders have of a company. Preece et al (1995) reveal that Levi Strauss jeans line was involved in a lot of corporate sponsorship and philanthropy that could amount to about $10 million annually but this was kept from public eye as the firm did not see the reason for communication on its charity. Following some business setbacks that came with two separate incidents that included the closing down of the San Antonio Plant during which disgruntled workers and other detractors brought a lot of criticism on Levi, and its withdrawal of support from the BOY SCOUT due to this organizations unwillingness to accept homosexuality which brought Levi under fire for supporting homosexuality, the company had to rethink its options of keeping its charity in the box. To save its dwindling image, Levi has since started making its charity works public and even carrying out further communication to make it better appreciated. Philanthropy helps to identify the firm as being of service to the community and humanity as a whole even when such acts are directed towards people we know nothing about. Preece et al finally conclude that there is no need for company's philanthropic works if it would not be made known to the public or will not help in keeping the name of the organization afloat.

2.5 FEEDBACK

However, for all the communication activities of a company to be effective, there is need for companies to get feedback on the efforts they make. Without the feedback, companies cannot be sure of what the results of their communication is and this may lead to discouragement and maybe the lack of feedback in the long run. A company that does not make the effort to get the feedback on its efforts is flying blind, Grey & Balmer (1998). He proposes a routine interaction with the stakeholders in order to get their reactions to the company activities and products. Feedback given to the company will help to decipher if their efforts have paid off, have gone wrong and what they will need to be improved. Bernstein (1984) maintains that a company owes the duty to its stakeholders to communicate because failure to communicate is negative communication. He looks at communication as the best means to get feedback and thus encourage improvement.

Besides, feedback is the most important way of making the stakeholders feel their affiliation to the company. This means companies must listen to or at least give the impression that they are listening to what their public wants. Getting the stakeholders to give their opinions helps to make them feel listened to and keeps them attached to the company since they feel decisions are taken based on their opinions. This gives the need for companies to keep open contact and be prepared to listen.

In 1972, a London Borough employed a creative business to analyse its business performance. The first step taken by the creative business was to devise a format of a newsletter for the company. Two months later, several annoyed clients had called the company to lay their complaints about their services since through the newsletter, they were able to understand their rights and they could get the contact of the person to call in case they had complaints. This showed the lack of communication that had kept the company on low profile and left the clients quietly moving away. By ensuring feedback, they were able to make their complaints heard and the company could address them. According to Nakra (2000), some companies make use of the Consumer Satisfaction Index (CSI) conducted by their marketing departments to evaluate the success of their projects so far. Reactions from these indexes help in defining the path the company takes after that.

While contemporary media has always been used as the best means to reach out to consumers with the radio maintaining its place as the easiest to access with even the ability to get to people even when they do not choose to listen, more modern and effective methods of communicating with a company's publics are coming up strong. Companies can put advertising these days on the back of buses since it passes through public space and can easily be seen, there is the use of the text messages where companies can send text to millions of people on their offers and be sure to reach people of all age groups. E-marketing is becoming more and more effective given the introduction and the extensive use of the internet etc. It should be noted that these modern forms of advertising are gradually been designed to be cost effective and avoid the possibilities of deliberate viewership i.e. it gets to the stakeholders even when they are not aware of something coming up and when they have no intentions to watching any forms of publicity.

Thus the desire of every company wanting to build a good image for itself all goes down to the use of communication. As already seen, the failure to communicate is a decision to fail since lack of communication is being looked upon as passivity. Reaching out to stakeholders and making a plea for a company's reputation involves choosing the right channels of communication, the right activities that communicate the company's better intentions and making the right choices in terms of partnerships, quality products and services etc. While the media like television, radio, internet, mobile phones and others are important channels in the communication chain, it should be noted that the actions of companies speak louder than words. Yet there is the need for these actions to be made known to the public using the traditional channels of communication. However, all the information, the money and the efforts made to get to the stakeholders may not be very effective if the companies do not get the feedback on their activities and their products. This also spells the needs for contacts to be included in advertising and reach-out channels and the need for public relations and marketing departments to work hard on the CSI-Consumer Satisfaction index.

2.6 SUMMARY

The means of getting out to the stakeholders has increased over time. While the new technology is been used to sell the companies offers, they could as well be perfect media for companies to use to sell their image as well. There is the increase in the use of text messages which definitely gets out to several people instantly and can get to all groups of people as well since there is a mass increase in mobile phone ownership today. Companies can get to communicate their works and image related information via text messages, urban transport facilities like the buses and the trams, roadside posters etc.

We have been able to establish that communication is important if companies want to be known for the right things and respected as producers and service givers. While the quality of goods and services offered is important in the image building and maintenance process, companies need the media to put out self-laudatory information about themselves. The company name and identity, partnerships, social activities etc are amongst the many ways used to communicate a good reputation. Action should always be followed by communication and vice versa. This permits the companies to explain the reasons and course of their actions in order to be better understood and

to stay alive in the minds of consumers. When all the work is done, companies must give room for feedback from the stakeholders in order to give them the impression that they are been listened to and are important part of the company. Equally, companies should try getting feedback on the activities so as to be sure of the impact that their actions have had on their public.

The above thus make up the different activities that ordinary industries undergo in order to get and maintain a good image. These will be used as the parameters that will act the measuring rode for companies in the experience industry.

Most literature reveal that companies use a combination of all the communication means in order to get to wider number of stakeholders. This is because the stakeholders are varied, have different impact on the company and could be better reached through different means. Thus, the factors we have taken from other authors that are the best ways to communicate a better image shall be used as a model to measure the company, Star Bowling AB, as a case study in the experience industry. The ideal model that will work for a company working on a better reputation will look like this:
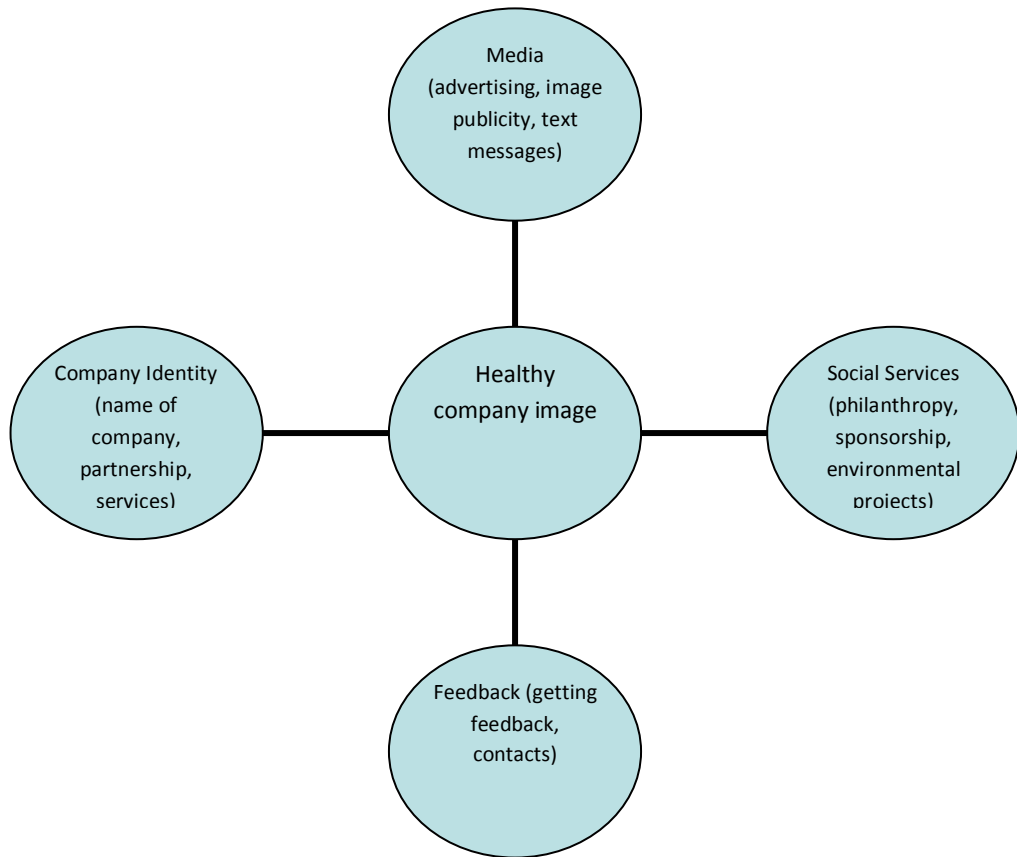
Figure 4: Communicative parameters for image building, Zencha Lily, 2010

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 DATA COLLECTION

In this chapter, I am going to discuss my choice of the use of qualitative research method in this study and the advantage it has on the research of a new area of study like this one. I will give the step by step process I used in data collection and why I choose the specific case study I used in the project. I will also explain the reason for some decisions I took during the data collection process.

3.2 CHOOSING A QUALITATIVE METHOD

Qualitative research is a method of data collection that consists of interpretive material practices which makes the world more visible. Denzin & Lincoln (in Ritchie & Lewis, 2003), thinks that qualitative research practice turns the world into representations through interviews, field notes, conversations etc. This helps in the study of the world in their natural settings and making interpretive conclusions. Silverman (2010) looks at qualitative research as story telling which he thinks should be part of any work that is worth reading. He however recommends that the choice of research method should be based on theoretical framework. Thus the topic at stake and the existing literature on the topic should guide the choice of the method of data collection that will be used. Nigel (2001) recommends qualitative methods especially face-to-face interviews when it comes to doing a detailed study of a particular situation. Besides, Eisenhardt (1989) in the book, building theories from case study research, posits that case study research is most appropriate for new study areas since the resultant theory can be tested and could be empirically valid.

Some other authors have defined qualitative research as all forms of research or means of data collections that does not make use of any forms of quantification. No statistical manipulations or counting are needed to arrive at results and all conclusions are made based on existing representations. This gives room for all forms of data collection means including the use of

interviews (face-to-face, phone and computer interviews etc), use of field notes, text and analysis of documents, observation, video recordings etc.

Since my work is based on how experience industries use communication to build a good image for themselves, and given the fact that the industry is new and image building in this area has not been researched yet, the use of case studies was more appropriate and that led me to use a specific case study as a representation of industries in the experience economy. Using a case study means getting as much information from one source as much as possible and with as many means as possible. It is basically exploring the chosen cases as much as possible and paying attention to the details that may be helpful to drawing conclusions on the specific research project.

In large scale surveys, an interview schedule is used which contains all the questions that will be asked an interviewer. The order and words of the questions are followed strictly and are given to the interviewer before the date of the interview. Meanwhile, research that is aimed at a small survey size usually makes use of Interview guides. This method is a set of guidelines containing the main ideas or the guidelines that will aid the interviewer and interviewee in the course of the discussion. The guide is never followed strictly and there is room for follow up questions and more flexibility with the way the questions are asked so as to enable a wide range of answers and information. This method is good for case study research and other qualitative study methods.

Given the advantages presented by the qualitative research methods, I have used the face-to-face interview method, observation, analysis of documents etc for this study. This permits me to explore the topic in all the ways possible and get answers to all the questions I intend to have answered. In order for me to get as much information as intended to, i made use of an interview guide instead of an interview schedule. This means that there was a draft of the questions that will be asked but the guide was not followed strictly and follow up questions were asked in case of the need for further explanation or when a new idea came up.

Besides, using a case study helped me to explore the use of communication in image building from a clearly representational perspective since I could easily make out what the company does or does not do.

3.3 RESEARCH AT STAR BOWLING PLANET AB

The main data was collected by interviewing and observing the case study - Star Bowling Planet AB, which is a pleasure spot operating a restaurant, a bowling alley and other competitive games. I found them interesting as a case study because they run two different services of the experience industry in one and that is the Restaurant and other interesting activities like bowling, shooting, golf, slot car track, dart, rodeo, basket, air hockey, fire camp, screens to watch sporting activities like football etc. Even though it is a relatively new place (5 years old), the place has expanded fast and now offers a wide variety of sporting and other social activities to its clients. More expansion plans are still underway.

The main purpose of the research was to gain inside into their works towards building a good image and how communication helps them to fulfil this aim.

Getting an opportunity for an interview was not difficult since I got the contact of the company from the student counsellor. Once I called the marketing and event manager of the company and requested an interview on the bases of academic work, she immediately accepted and we made a date. I originally requested for three interviews with top personnel but due to the unavailability of the general manager who is the owner of the business, I only got to talk with the marketing director and later a receptionist. Besides, being a sole proprietor business which originally started on very small scale, there is no real hierarchy with a few set authorities that manage the business. For this reason, I only got to do an in depth interview with to one person. The purpose of the interview was to find out how Star Bowling as an experience industry uses communication to build a good image for itself. Being a successful restaurant and in-door sporting hot-spot, I realized they will be the ideal place for the research.

The interview with the marketing and event Manager was conducted at about 10am in the restaurant of Star Bowling. The place was not yet open for the day for business but the workers were all there working to prepare for the day to begin. We sat in a quiet corner of the restaurant and this was significant because i could easily have some things pointed out to me but we got some interruptions with some workers coming by to talk to the interviewer. I also took a friend along who speaks Swedish so as to ease communication and just to make sure i do not miss any important information.

Even though I had told her the reason for the research on the phone and had sent her an interview guide by email about four days before the interview, I repeated the aim of my research to her and we began to talk based on the questions in the interview guide and more follow up questions. In order to be more alert during the interview, I used a recorder and later transcribed it.

After doing the interview with the marketing and event manager, i went back to the office much later to get a copy of the documents they use on day to day basis. These included the documents they hand out to potential customers, customers, copies of adverts they place on the media and the annual report (could not get the annual report). This was to permit me get to understand their communication style better. I took advantage of this to talk to a receptionist so that i could better understand the functioning of the place and their relationship with the customers. Talking with the receptionist was also a means to understand the importance of such procedures as booking for launch tables or time to play games and to check out the way they relate with customers. I later got the opportunity to see the receptionist at their jobs when I decided to go there as a customer later.

3.4 OBSERVATION AND OPINION SAMPLING

Finally I decided to visit the place in order to get the experience of being a customer there and getting to their services first hand. Using observation as one of the research methods was important because it would help me match the information i got from the interviews with the reality on the ground. Besides, going there as a regular customer was going to help me answer some questions and live the experience of a customer at Star Bowling. To make my observation more meaningful, I carefully went through the interview I had conducted with the event manager and the receptionist so as to equip myself with the picture they paint of the company. Then I carefully studied the documents I had collected from the company, studied the website of the company in order to better understand their services. I took note of the standards they intend to set for their company, checked specific price tags and the values they attached to their games.

After doing all of these, accompanied by two friends (both friends speak Swedish fluently), i went to Star Bowling Planet AB to eat and bowl. I followed the normal procedure that all

customers follow by calling to book for a place to have launch and try a game. The receptionist was very polite and helpful on the phone. We went there at the booked time, had launch and bowled. I took note of the quality of their services, the convenience of the atmosphere inside, took a close look at the kitchen and how services are delivered amongst other things. I equally took advantage of this visit to talk to some customers. Without mentioning the fact that I was doing a research, I tried to engage a few people in conversation during which I got their opinions on the services offered. Before going to the restaurant, I was sure of the kinds of questions I could ask customers when I must have engaged them in a friendly conversation.

I also took note of the fact that most people I would meet there will be most comfortable speaking Swedish and since I am still a beginner in the language, I took two friends along. I explained the purpose of the research to them, the reason for the questions I wanted to ask the customers and why I decided to use that specific method to collect my data.

The friends spoke to customers who could not express themselves in English while I took all the conversations in English. I stood beside them during each conversation and after each conversation, I wrote down the highlights of the conversation when I got the opportunity to write without being noticed.

3.5 PARAMETERS

After a critical review of the literature on the use of communication in image building, I decided to use some of the parameters that other authors have concluded as being the working force behind the good image of a company as my parameters for this study. The parameters will be used to code the findings of the research since they are taken from the content of the literature explored for the study. These parameters contain the essential things that have led to the success of some manufacturing and service industries in building their image. I shall use the same parameters to test the experience industries and in this case my case study which is Star Bowling Planet AB. The importance of such factors has already been deciphered and their relationship to proper communication stressed. Thus the activities will be lined to the use of proper communication which will finally impact on the image of the company. For this reason, I am going to use four main parameters with several subjects linked to them.

1. MEDIA RELATIONS
   - Advertising and other information to the media
   - Internet (website and others like face book)

2. COMPANY IDENTITY
   - Name of company
   - Partnership and celebrity fit
   - Services (quality, politeness, promptness)

3. SOCIAL ACTIVITIES
   - Philanthropy
   - Sponsorship
   - Environmental project

4. FEEDBACK
   - How feedback is gotten
   - Means of contact

3.6 CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

An interview guide was used to conduct the first interview and get as much information as possible. An interview guide contains a set of guidelines or ideas to the interview question but is usually not followed strictly since there is room for follow up questions. Eisenhardt (1989). The interview guide contained ten short questions. But the order and words of the questions were not followed strictly and other relevant questions came up in the course of the conversation. In the long run, I had to send some other questions which I omitted or did not think of at the time of the interview by email so that they were answered and sent back via email. The choice of questions were geared towards getting information about the company, getting answers to the research questions which is to find out how companies in the experience industry use communication to build and maintain a good image. I also tried to relate my questions to the parameters that I deducted from the communicative methods used in ordinary manufacturing and service industries.

The questions that were contained in the initial interview guide included:

1. What are the different channels of communication you use to reach out to your publics or stakeholders?
2. How important do you think the image of your company is to the success of your business?
3. What percentage of your capital is spent on cause-related marketing, sponsorship and creating a good image?
4. What other social activities or sponsorship do you carry out aside marketing your products?
5. Do you communicate philanthropic or charity activities when you carry them out?
6. Do you use different kinds of media to get to your customers, shareholders and other stakeholders? Why the choice of these media?
7. Has your company ever experienced any specific scandals or crises and how did you work to restore your image?
8. Do you have any business partners? If yes, what criteria did you use to choose them as business partners?
9. What do you think is your marketing advantage in relation to other companies that operate the same kind of business?
10. I will also like to have a short history of the company.

Before visiting Star Bowling to have launch and talk to a few customers, I put together some relevant questions that I could ask in the course of a conversation. I did not reveal the fact that I was conducting a research and asked the questions to the customers as part of on-going conversations. I got into conversation with some of the customers during launch and to two others at the bowling alley. The questions I asked the customers were derived from the parameters in the literature and from the information I had obtained from interviewing the Event and Marketing Manager and the receptionist of Star Bowling.

The main aim of talking to the customers was to get their opinion on the services of Star Bowling and most of all to know if they would still be customers to Star Bowling if they have alternative places to go.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

In other to respect the rights of the interviewees, i have decided to call her the Marketing and event manager by her title while omitting her name. Besides, the identity of the other interviewees will be kept secret and they shall be identified by the use of 'Customer' plus a mathematically progressive number. This is to ensure anonymity. I equally assured them that the information i get will be used for educational purposes only. In this case for this research work only.

3.8 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

Some researchers have dubbed qualitative research as 'soft' and lacking in authenticity since a lot of individual assessment goes into deriving the results. They opt for quantitative research where numbers can depict the results in ways that do not need the personal interpretation or opinion of the researcher in bringing out results. However, qualitative research has been noted by others as owning the grounds for its rich depiction and strategic comparison across cases. Miles & Huberman (1994). Qualitative research is not just good for studies in areas that have not been explored before, an in-depth view of a company or case study helps to research a company from a bigger picture than just asking questions and getting answers. By conducting interviews and doing observation, a lot more information is acquired than a quantitative research can depict.

I initially set out to interview three (3) persons from Star Bowling and this list included the manager or owner of the business, but because he was always too busy and because I could not get his contact directly, I finally talked to two persons, the Marketing and Event Manager and a receptionist. The two interviews turned out to be very important because the Marketing and event Manager knows everything about communication in the company. This is because her job is geared towards communicating with the stakeholders of the company and she was in a better position to answer my questions than anyone else.

Besides, talking to the receptionist was very important since they are in charge of the immediate relation of the company with the customer which is the most important stakeholder of the company. The receptionists are in charge of the bookings via the phone or the internet, and they

are the first people that are seen on entry into the company. Since they take charge of the booking and the services, they better know the statistics, peak periods and the reality of the operation and if the company is succeeding or failing.

Besides, i wanted to talk to as many customers as possible but due to the language problem and the fact that most people were too busy to talk, and also given that the picture i got which indicted that most people do bowling after launch, i postponed most conversation to the bowling time but was actually left disappointed when i met just one couple aside myself and my friends bowling after launch. So finally i talked to eight customers instead of the target fifteen i set out for.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I shall present the finding of the research based on all the information I got on the ground. I shall use the parameters gathered from the literature to break down the information i got from the interview with the event manager, the receptionist and the documents I gathered from the company. Then I will later present the information I gathered from the customers and then talk a little about my personal experience.

4.1 FINDINGS

Following the findings from the theoretical framework, I decided to use some key parameters brought out by other researchers as a good measure for what makes the deciding factor on if a company is building a good image or not. These parameters have been indicated in chapter three above and all the factors will be matched against the information obtained from Star Bowling planet. I will at the end of each parameter, make an analysis of how the company's actions can affects its image and then later use these findings in order to draw out some results.

4.2 MEDIA RELATIONS

4.2.1 ADVERTISING AND OTHER INFORMATION TO THE MEDIA

As already mentioned, the media, especially the contemporary media are one of the strongest tools that can be used by a company to remain in the minds of the stakeholders and to build a good image. Poor relation with the media may get the company into trouble and rip it of its popularity.

Star Bowling seems to be creating a good media environment for itself. They make use of the television like TV3, commercial radio stations, newspapers like the GP (Goteborg Posten), and magazines. During peak periods like Christmas period, they put some advertisements on the back of urban buses mostly owned by the transport company vasttrafik. This is to enable communication between them and their publics.

'we have had some advertising......... So we do different things, we try to reach out here and there...and face book of course'. (Event manager)

They try to keep their contact with the media in as many ways as possible. They believe that continuity in all publicity work is the key to keeping them in the market and maintaining their image.

'eh i think it is very important to be shown and to have continuity in how you are showing yourself. And to do some... eh......offers. Some offers too because even though we are big, there are still some people who don't know what we are and being here doesn't know that we exist'. (Event manager)

Recently they have made newspaper advertisements to present the new offers they have on the new and second floor of the company. Promotional prices were offered for those coming in to take the new games in order to encourage more people to visit the place and get the experience. The advertising presented the new games on the second floor with their information geared towards the fact that they are the first to present most of them, especially the race room, to Goteborg. Focusing on the fact that they are the first to bring specific sports to Gothenburg is their way of stressing to the public that they have no competition in these areas.

Figure 5: Advert on the new race-room game at Star Bowling, Star Bowling, 2010

They are very vigilant about including their contact number and the address of the company in all adverts and documents that the company hands out. The marketing and event manager revealed that about 4% of the company capital is spent on advertising.

Following Bernstein, the more a company communicates, the more it is able to build a good image for itself. Staying out of public eye is the easiest queue up for a bad image. Star Bowling seems to be doing a lot in the field of media relations. Buying space on the radio, television, newspapers and the back of buses, helps them to remain in the public eye and they are able to

keep their image alive in the minds of the public. The constant advertisement and money paid to the media for publicity is the easiest way of proving to its stakeholders that it is available and has services to offer. Besides, the more they buy time on the media, the lesser the probability of misleading information being published about the company. Besides, making their games look really unique and priding the company for being the first to present several games to the Goteborg public, makes the company attractive and could easily get the attention of people who try out some pleasure activities in order to stand out within a specific societal class.

4.2.2 INTERNET (company website)

The internet has gradually increased in availability and researchers have picked it out as the easiest way to reach out to people from a distance, all age groups and all walks of life. Just like most companies, Star Bowling Planet has a website, www.starbowling.se. The site contains the prices of food at the restaurant and daily opening hours, pictures of the interior of the first floor of the company, information on how to book for launch, conference room and other activities in the company. There are also regular schedules for the sporting events that people can watch on the giant screens at Star Bowling Planet and the menu for the dishes served at the restaurant are put up on a daily basis and the prices for some of the activities like bowling, conference room rent out, food, kamp five are also available on the site.

The website however does not have update on the news, activities or actions that they undertake within the company. Given the fact that Star Bowling offers different activities ranging from Bowling to golf, hunting, Kamp race, dart, rodeo, race room, slot-car racing, basket, air hockey, bull riding, billiard, dart, fire camp etc, the website is quite limited since it has information on very few sports they engage in. Thus, apart from Bowling, kamp 5 & 3, information on the new conference room that they have, and the match schedules, the other forms of sports have not yet been added to the website. Contacts for the company (phone numbers and email address) which is very important is also found on the site.

The website is used for strictly commercial purposes since it contains mostly prices and some offers at the company. Other social activities carried out by Star Bowling are not communicated via the website. The events they sponsor, news on their activities and the annual report which is

common place with most companies to publish their annual reports on their websites is also absent.

Apart from the expression that their offers are great, there is nothing that communicates a good image to other stakeholders except the customers .They however acknowledge the fact that the site is limited and does not contain information on the activities that have been opened in the new floor. They are on their way to updating the site.

> *'We are actually on the way to ....eh..making the website better*
> *because right now it does not show anything on the second floor or*
> *all that we can offer'.* (Event manager)

The internet has become one of the most used media today and people easily turn to it for a large amount of information. Star Bowling is not using its access to the internet to capacity. The website lacks information on over half of the activities taking place at Star Bowling. This leaves those who rely on the internet as their main source of information with the notion that Star Bowling is just every other Bowling place around town with no clue of the games they have that are exclusive to the place.

Star Bowling is also making use of face book to get their company known to the public.

4.3 COMPANY IDENTITY

4.3.1 PARTNERSHIP AND CELEBRITY FIT

Star Bowling believes in using its connections or its network of friends when it comes to working with people other than their employees and customers. Since the company is owned by one person and there are no other branches in other areas etc., the company has no particular partners with which it operates businesses. All forms of collaboration especially when it gets to choosing events for sponsorship; are done using the owner's network of friends.

'Interest! What my boss is interested in, eh… games. Actually my bosses were brought up here, in Gothenburg and they know a lot of people so with a lot of friendly things and different people come up to ask can you help us, can you sponsor us with this and that and you get this and that. It is a network and everyone is like sponsoring and helping each other'. (Event manager)

Thus, they have not made specific business partnerships and rely on childhood friends when it comes to sponsorship.

With no real business partners and the reliance on friends in case of sponsorships or other activities, Star Bowling may run the risk of getting the wrong people to help with their sponsorship activities or those they intend to sponsor. Working with people or other companies that are not looked upon favourably in public eye may affect the reputation of Star Bowling. Thus, Star Bowling does not put a thought of its image on those it picks to work with on sponsorships since they base their decisions on Friendship.

However, having a network of childhood friends could possible help to guarantee the functioning of the business and continuous support for its activities since partners then will be acting on their affiliation and not the reality of the image of the company.

4.3.2 SERVICES (quality, politeness, promptness)

'....the service has to be really polite and all the service has to be very polite and helpful and just enjoy the work. It is very important. It is more important than all the advertising you can do in the papers, in radio or wherever you want to put your commercial.' (Event manager)

The kinds of services that each company offers its customers gives them reason to either come back or go for good. Star Bowling has worked on good service for its customers as its own main image strategy. The market and event manager thinks it is more important than any form of advertising or activity that the company can carry out. They look at a good image as a basis of what they can do to get the customers that they have to keep coming back.

Their first move to keep the service at high quality and maintain a good image starts when a customer calls them to book for space or make a reservation. The receptionists at the call-in service are asked to be very polite and accommodating. The first physical contact to them is equally important and it comes when they welcome the customers into the planet and help them with their coats. Regular customers are given some preference and the company tries to keep very close relationship and even keeps private contact with them. The workers are always there to shake their hands when they come in to have fun and encourage them to always come back.

Workers at Star Bowling planet are obliged to be polite, helpful and supportive of customers and always give a listening ear in case they have some complaints or want specific services. They work at being prompt and polite to customers. Customers with complaints are attended to very urgently and the best solutions are sort to please those who do not seem satisfied with the service and even when there are complaints over problems caused by the customers themselves, they try to make it a company fault and apologize for it. All of this is done with the hope of making the customers feel at home and rate the company as having a high image enough for them to want to come back there to play or at least recommend the place to other people through word of mouth.

> *'But we don't give them free alcohol or food, it is against the law and we think that we shouldn't give everything simply because a customer is not happy. It is not always the customers are right but we are always trying to make them feel that they are'*. (Event manager)

Besides, the company tries to respect government rules. The Swedish rule that alcohol should not be given for free to customers is strictly observed and there is an internal rule not to give out food for free. Thus, complaining customers are not served free alcohol or food no matter what their problem is. This is in a bid to maintain a good image before the government and not to break the countries rules and regulations.

All documents handed out to the customers have the addition or slogan "Great….is our game". This goes for the restaurant and the games. Thus the slogan for the restaurant is "Great food is our game" while that for all the sporting events is "Great fun is out game". This is to give the customers the feeling that they can offer the best services to them.

Calling the company to book for launch or time to play a game is very important since there are usually too many people at the company during working hours. Customers who do not call may not get space to eat or play at the company if they come without notice. According to the receptionist, this is particularly true of weekends, launch hours daily and after work hours on week days. The receptionist job is to be polite and offer alternative time if the time the customer wants is not convenient for the company. They provide directions to customers when they go in to have fun and they are required to always have a smile on giving the impression that they are happy to welcome each customer and they will be willing to help if need be.

All the receptionists speak both Swedish and English so that all customers are understood and they are supposed to appear to be enjoying their job.

This is no doubt; great service is one of the best ways to promote a company's image and to get its customers to keep coming back. According to Star Bowling, good service to its customers is its best bet when it comes to preserving its image. This is because they count on having regular customers and believe that word of mouth communication from their customers to their friends will help preserve their reputation and bring more customers to them. But this method is limited since people who have never visited Star Bowling before may not be aware of what it has to offer and if it is a reliable place to have fun in.

4.4 SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

4.4.1 PHILANTHROPY

Like most other companies, Star Bowling planet is involved in philanthropic activities, helping people who are not particularly linked to the company. The choice on which association to give help to comes from the many applications that are sent to the company from individuals and associations asking for some form of support for projects or some work that will benefit others. The boss is usually the one who chooses whom the company should help at any point in time and the choice is made from a long list of request they receive from different organizations each year.

> *'......We do different every year. Every year there are lots of people*
> *calling and my boss is like ok..this year we gonna do this and this*
> *year we are gonna do that. Everything from child, different*
> *organizations to polishunden...they call every year eh... but it is*
> *different every year'.* (Event manager)

Usually, they try to carry out some form of philanthropy every year and help different associations. They help associations that are working with children and on a yearly basis; they give help to an association called **Polishunden** (this has to do with training dogs). The choice of which organisation to help could rely on the boss' network of friends or a course that is close to the heart of the boss and sometimes, organisations that appear to really need help.

However, these philanthropic works are done in the dark and there is no exposure. The company does not do any form of publicity or reveal to the public by doing publicity or getting media coverage to show to the public that they have helped some associations. Preece et al (1995) are of the opinion that there is no need for a company to take part in any philanthropic activities if it would not help it to stay image healthy. This is because, if people do not get to know that a company is involved in helping members of the community, the philanthropy tends to look like private help that is of no benefit to the company. Thus Star Bowling planets involvement in

philanthropy may not help it keep is image since it does not make such aid public and the stakeholders do not know that such activities are going on. These places the company in a dangerous situation since most stakeholders would not view it as particularly beneficial or helpful to its immediate community.

4.4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT

This is what a company does to look environmentally friendly or at least to get a good image before the members of the immediate public where it is operating. This has to do with preserving the environment in which we work and carrying out activities that may lead to preserving the environment. Star Bowling does not have any environmental safety projects. Apart from its philanthropic activities which it does not particularly make public, the company does not engage in any environmental activity.

4.4.3 SPONSORSHIP

Just like philanthropy, the decision to sponsor events depends on the wish of the boss. Usually, the decision is wrapped around the boss' network of friends who help each other in case of need. Thus, if someone within the network needs a sponsor for an event, then Star Bowling can come in.

The company however does not plan to do much sponsorship this year (2010) as part of their marketing strategy. Due to the fact that the company they had directed a bulk of their sponsorship to, seems to be working with other bowling clubs out of the town, there is fear that if these bowling clubs get into Gothenburg, they may shift the customers of Star Bowling to themselves. Thus the refusal to sponsor this year is a means of pressurizing them to get sponsorship from Star Bowling alone. This will enable Star Bowling to get all the customers who are interested in bowling to come to the planet.

Here again, the choice of sponsorship depends on friendship and no real criteria. Star Bowling does not take activity and other products fit, and not even the choice of partner for the

sponsorship into consideration. While sponsorship may be a booster to the company's sales, it may not in this case help it out with its image which may have long term effects.

Social activities are one of the most important ways of making the company look likeable. This explains why most companies even include their philanthropic and environmental activities in their websites and other media publicity. Levi Strauss used philanthropy to save its image in a time of trouble, thus showing that social activities have a strong impact. However, if they are not made public, then they are made for nothing. Thus Social activities may not be any addition to Star Bowing's image.

4.5 FEEDBACK

4.5.1 GETTING FEEDBACK

There are no specific programmes used to get feedback from the stakeholders. While feedback is important to Star Bowling, the company relies on its bookings and the satisfaction of the customers that come to the company every day as their criteria to ensure that the customers are happy. They take care of the feelings of the customers that are present and try to please them as much as possible. Outside this natural feedback method, there are no other set up means to get the impressions and opinions of customers except in informal conversations with friends outside the planet. Thus a smile on the faces of the customers when leaving after spending time at Star Bowling is considered enough feedback for their work.

However, using the immediate customers as the single means of feedback is not always the best means to get real criticism for the company. This is because this method leaves out other people in the long chain of stakeholders. Besides, since they do not ask people for their impressions, stakeholders do not feel like participants in the company. They are not part of the family and their individual opinions do not matter much to the company. This may threaten a company's image when people feel left out.

4.5.2 MEANS OF CONTACT

Getting to the customers is getting easier for Star Bowling. They now have someone who calls other companies trying to market Star Bowling and attract more customers to spend time with them. Their contact addresses are also available on the internet, advertisements and other documents handed out in order to permit customers to call in and make reservations.

> *'eh….we have basically one girl who calls different companies up and seek for new customers to come to us. And eh…social activities, when you are out private and talk to someone, you are actually marketing your place'.* (Event manager)

Besides, they have some workers sent out during conferences to offer people handouts with information on Star Bowling planet and explain to them how to get to the location. Other offers are made to attract people to search for the place and to try to get in contact with the staff at Star Bowling to get reservation and have fun. These include activities at cheaper rates for people of a specific age group usually young people etc.

Word of mouth communication is also important in keeping up the image of Star Bowling. The treatment they give their customers is in a bid to get them to talk to their friends about the company and maybe bring friends there to eat and play.

Contacts are usually made to help enable sales and not in a bid to work on the image of the company.

4.6 CUSTOMERS OPINIONS

Maintaining company image is important in bringing the stakeholders and customers back to a company even when the going is tough. Out of the eight customers I spoke to, I talked to six of them during launch and two others who stayed to bowl after launch.

4.6.1 SERVICES

Star Bowling singled out quality service as its main strategy to maintain a good image. After talking to eight customers about their views of the services they are being offered at the company, the data showed that, three customers thought that the services of Star Bowling are very good; three others thought it was just good while two said it was poor. All three customers who said really enjoyed the services of Star Bowling indicated that they were regular customers and one of them has been a customer for over three years.

> *'I really love coming here because the food is very good and they are my neighbours. I work just around the corner'*

One of those who thought the services were just ok added that it did not really matter the kind of services they had.

> *'The services do not matter to me. They serve good food and I really enjoy the games I play here'*

Amongst the two people who said the services were poor, one of them said he was bowling there for the first time in six months. He thought the receptionists do not often listen and are always too busy to be of much help. He went as far as mentioning another bowling place he goes to often saying he just came on the specific day of the conversation just because he was closer to Star Bowling and hungry and just stopped by to eat and play.

4.6.2 HOW DID YOU LEARN ABOUT STAR BOWLING?

Four of the customers I talked to at Star Bowling heard about the company from friends who either just told them about the place or took them there to have a good time. Three others became customers because of the proximity of the place to their job sites. They considered it the most decent eatery close to their job sites and they kept coming back because they could eat and play

games during launch break. One person said he got to know the place when he was searching for somewhere to eat.

4.6.3 LOYALTY

Most companies survive on customer loyalty and that is why Star Bowling treats its regular customers with a lot of respect. Of the eight people interviewed, four said they would return to Star Bowling even if they find other bowling places. They admitted liking the place and since they have become accustomed to playing and eating there, and with the new games coming up, they really don't have a reason to move.

Two others were just indifferent saying it really did not matter where they go as long as they enjoy the experience where they are. Two others would definitely prefer other places.

4.7 PERSONAL OBSERVATION

The receptionist I talked to on the phone was very polite and helpful and the person who served in the restaurant was polite and had a constant smile on her face. Apart from one of the receptionist that kept me waiting for four minutes while she was on the phone having a personal conversation, the others were generally helpful, welcoming and ready to be of help.

When I got into the restaurant, the first thing that caught my attention was the crowd that was in the restaurant of the company for launch. The place was full to capacity and there was barely space to accommodate others. Some customers only got space to eat when some other customers were done eating and left. However, the dish that I ordered was already finished and everyone who came was forced to choose from just two of four dishes. Even though I could not get what I wanted to eat, the music was very soothing and good for launch.

One other observation I made was the fact that very few people stayed for the bowling or other games. From talking to some customers, I realised that most of those who ate launch were those who worked just nearby. Apart from my friends and I, there was only one other couple that bowled after launch. But the receptionists were busy taking phone calls and booking time and

space for others who wanted to play games later in the day. I was made to understand that weekends were the peak period and those who wanted to play games during weekend had to book at least a week ahead of time.

4.8 SUMMARY

So far, we have realized that Star Bowling relies on good services as its main way to get a good image for itself. They try to make their contact with customers as memorable as possible and try to solve all problems that they may encounter while spending time with them without breaking the rule of not offering free alcohol to customers. However, customers have different reactions to the quality of services offered to them. While the company does not have any official partners, most decisions to sponsor events or relate to another company is based on the relationship that the boss has with the other company.

They are involved in philanthropic works and this happens on a yearly basis but the information is not been sent out to the public so as to make them aware of the good deeds of the company. No forms of environmental projects are carried out and sponsorships are done even though this year, there are plans to suspend some sponsorship due to problems with the regular people they use in their sponsorships.

Feedback is not really organized since all they want is the satisfaction of all the people who spend time with them all the time. Thus, problems encountered during services are solved but no further feedback is acquired from customers and other stakeholders on the services or the image of the company.

4.9 AN IMAGINARY REALITY

Henry works very close Star Bowling Planet AB and was first introduced to the place by his colleagues who ate there on regular basis. On his first day at the restaurant, he enjoyed the food, seating in a huge restaurant with beautiful soft music flowing in from somewhere and later he was able to bond with his colleagues over a game (Bowling) they played after launch. From that

first day, he has been a regular customer to the place either as a way to keep his colleagues company or a way to hook up with other friends for launch without having to go too far from the job side. He gradually started going to Star Bowling with his friends during the weekend to play and just have fun.

Then one weekend, a friend suggested taking him to another launch and Bowling Company. Then he realised he had become so accustomed to Star Bowling that he hardly thought of other places. After spending time with his friend having fun in another place during the weekend, he was back to the office on Monday and that meant launch and play at Star Bowling.

While walking into Star Bowling on Monday during lunch break, unconsciously he began to think about it as a choice for his daily break. The food was as good as usual, he was having fun getting the experience with his colleagues, the music and the charm of the place was refreshing enough to pull him off the tough morning at work. The receptionist that welcomed him to the bowling alley today was just polite and friendly, but then he remembered that at other times, they seemed really absent minded and maybe not in the right mood to welcome customers on certain days. Then there were days when his choice of food on the menu was finished even before he went to eat and he was forced to go for whatever they had to offer.

As someone who cares a lot about the environment, he thought to himself if the company was involved in any environmental activities at all. Then he thought that the company should be making enough money to involve itself in some philanthropic activities but he was not sure if the company was involved in any philanthropic work.

Henry then began to question himself. He asked himself if he would come back to eat at Star Bowling if a little crises occurred. He compared his experience at the company his friend took him to during the weekend and that which he got from Star Bowling daily. When he looked around and saw an enormous crowd in the dining room, he asked himself if they though highly of Star Bowling enough to come back to it or at least defend it on rainy days. And the thoughts just kept coming and the answer was....................

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I shall use the information presented in the data analysis to draw conclusions and present the results of the whole study. I shall base my conclusion on the parameters advanced by the literature on image building in ordinary manufacturing and service industries. Then I shall make proposals for further research.

As stated earlier in the study, we shall be comparing the use of communication in image building in the experience industry as opposed to the ordinary industry. The communication in the ordinary industry is portrayed from the literature obtained from the subject while we used a case study, Star Bowling Planet AB to represent the experience industry.

From the literature, we realised that ordinary industries have several means of communicating a good image. These were the parameters used to measure communication in the experience industry. Thus, in ordinary industries, communication geared towards image building includes Media relations (advertising, publicity of events, text messages, internet etc), Company Identity (name of company, logo, partnership and celebrity fit, quality of services), Social activities (philanthropy, sponsorship, environmental projects), Feedback (using feedback, means of contact). While some of these factors work better than others, it was realized that most companies use a combination of all the factors in order to capture as many stakeholders as they possibly can. I have been able to use these parameters to research image building in Star Bowling Planet AB.

5.1 ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTION

The main focus of the study as presented by the Research question is:

How do companies in the experience industry use communication in image building as compared to other ordinary manufacturing and service industries?

It is evident from its growth and expansion that Star Bowling has grown a lot since its creation. With new conference halls, over ten games (which they say are unique to Star Bowling) and restaurant, Star Bowling is expanding rather fast. Judging from the crowd that goes there for launch on weekdays and the games during the weekend, it is clear that the place is recording a marked degree of success. As indicated by one receptionist, the place is usually full of people coming to play such that those who fail to do a reservation for games during the weekend before visiting the place usually do not have space to have fun and are usually required to come back another time. Thus given how successful they are, it will then be necessary to know how much communication they engage in so as to achieve this goal.

5.2a. How much communication do companies in the experience industry do in order to stay afloat and keep the business going?

According to the market and event Manager of Star Bowling, the image of the company is very important to the company. The biggest effort made by the company to maintain a good image is to keep the customers that visit the place quite satisfied with good reception. But given how successful they are in the market, how much communication do they do to keep this position. Based on information presented in the analysis, we are going to find out which parameters, in the use of communication to build a good image, are used EFFECTIVELY by Star Bowling Planet AB. This is because some of the parameters are met but they are not used effectively to help in building a good image for Star Bowling. As we have analyzed already, Star Bowling is involved in several forms of communication but they do not use some of them to capacity.

PARAMETERS	USED	USE EFFECTIVELY
Advertising through all media	✓	✓
Internet	✓	☒
Partnership and celebrity fit	✓	☒

Services	✓	✓
Philanthropy	✓	☒
Sponsorship	✓	☒
Environmental project	☒	☒
Feedback	✓	☒
Contact	✓	✓

✓	Yes
☒	No

Figure 6: How much communication is used and how effective it is, Zencha Lily, 2010

From the parameters taken from the literature indicating how ordinary industries use communication to build a good image, I have used nine of these parameters. From the table above and drawing from the previous analysis, we realize that of nine of the parameters, eight of them are used in some way by Star Bowling. However, only three of them are being used effectively. These three include advertising and other information to the media, quality services and means of contact. These are actually carried out with the effort of getting the attention of the stakeholders. This goes a long way to prove that Star Bowling relies on its good services and advertising on the media to communicate its image to its stakeholders.

While other factors are considered, they are not being used effectively. For example, philanthropic works are being carried out but not with the intention of getting the public to perceive Star Bowling as likeable. Thus, it is evident that they do not communicate much with the intention of getting their stakeholders to like them. Just like the information contained in their website, Star Bowling gears its information towards precise economic gains with no long term intention of gaining a good image or a good reputation in front of its stakeholders. The company seems to focus more on its customers and not the rest of the stakeholders.

5.2b. *Does a good image matter to the companies in the experience industry as it does to other industries*

The event and marketing manager of Star Bowling says a good image is important for the company and the best way to get there is to offer the customers the best services ever. However, as seen above, they do not engage in effectively communicating with their stakeholders as much as companies in the ordinary industries. Sales at Star Bowling is growing daily and this has permitted them to open up new games on an extra floor, create a new conference room and enlarge their offers, yet they do not spend as much in communicating a good image as ordinary industries do. From the data reviewed, it is evident that the 4% of their capital that is spent on advertising goes basically to attract more customers to the company and not on image building.

Taking the responses of the customers, of the eight customers interviewed, four of them will go back to Star Bowling no matter what happens and two others do not really bother about where they go for launch and games as long as they have the food and games they want and actually get a good experience at it. Just two will move in case they find an alternative. With a clear majority not bothered about other aspects of the communication, and the two who would switch still coming back every once in a while (even due to proximity), it is evident that a good image is not as important to Star Bowling as it is to companies in ordinary industries. This leaves us with the conclusion that companies in the experience industry do not need to work on image building and maintenance as ordinary industries do in order to stay in the market.

5.2c *Are there any differences in the communication channels used by the experience industry to sell their image to their stakeholders?*

Apparently, the experience industry does not have nor need any other strategies to sell their image. While they do not adhere to the communication strategies used by the ordinary industries, they have not come up with other communication channels. The basic elegance of their offers and the appeal it has to each individual it is apparently enough to play the trick.

This comes with the quality of the food put out by the restaurant, the mere elegance of the dinning, ranging from the decoration to the music played during launch, and the personal satisfaction that customers derive from the games there seems to replace all the communication

they can do to get a good image. This can be explained by the fact that those who say the services of Star Bowling are poor still go back there for fun while others actually think the services do not really matter as long as they get the satisfaction they want.

Thus we can conclude that companies in the experience industry do not need to work too hard to secure a good image since their strengths actually lie in the aesthetics of their services. The satisfaction that people get comes from the ability to satisfy the five senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and sound. According to Christensen (2009) a good experience does not only depend on the satisfaction of our prior expectations but from the satisfaction of the five senses. Pine & Gilmore (1998, in Christensen, 2009) posit that a good experience comes from engaging all five senses. Satisfying just some of these senses may not leave the experience as satisfying as it should be. Even when some aspects of the experience are not met, or when bad experiences come in to take control of the situation, companies in the experience industry could get and preserve customers if they work on satisfying the five senses. This could be a possible explanation for the loyalty of some customers who have had bad days with reception at Star Bowling. While they do not find the services and reception of Star Bowling attractive, they think it does not really matter since the experiences they have are quite satisfying. While the experience industries do not need as much communication as other ordinary industries, they however have a little work to do trying to give customers the value they want and to offer opportunities that stimulate the five senses.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The conclusion to my research reveals that companies in the Experience industry as represented by Star Bowling AB do not communicate and do not actually need to communicate as much about their good image as ordinary manufacturing and service industries. This is because while Star Bowling does not use communication effectively or to its advantage, there is still a growth in customer turn out and from the interview with the customers, there is also a lot of customer loyalty.

While Star Bowling is just a company in the large experience economy, the research is a start up point to exploring what makes a good reputation in the experience industry. Although the research reveals that traditional forms of communication are not very needed in this industry, it also reveal that companies in this industry need to focus on the value of the services and

experience they offer customers. They need to strive to make their experiences satisfying and as Christensen (2009) reveals, they need to strive to satisfy all five human senses. The new craze for the experience industry is due to the satisfaction that people hope to get from every activity and good, and companies in this industry are obliged to provide that. Providing customers with the right aesthetics values and the fond memories they would like to preserve goes beyond trying to create and preserve a good image for the industry. It has to do with satisfying the five senses and searching different means to communicate with individual satisfaction through the five senses.

5.3 LIMITATIONS AND PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Image building and maintenance in the experience industry is a new research area and that gave me reason to do a case study research. However, using one company may not really be representative of the huge experience economy. Even though one company could act as a representation, a study including more companies would have been a better representation. Most of this was caused by language difficulties which made it difficult to obtain information.

Given the limitations of my study and the fact that the topic is relatively new, I think a lot still has to be done in relation to the entire concept of the Experience industry as a whole and image building in the industry in particular. Much of what is available as literature in this area is the origin of the concept of the experience economy and not on its functioning.

This research is based on how companies in the experience industry use communication to build their image with the conclusions indicating that building a good image may not be very necessary. But I still think much has to be done in terms of stakeholder survey on the issue. While I based my work on the growth within the company, interview with customers and the functioning of the company, I think it is important for a quantitative study to be done that samples stakeholder opinions on what the most attractive force in the experience industry is.

Besides, customer's opinions should be sort in a larger scale survey on the issue of image building in the experience industry. This is because; the customers in one company may be a limitation and also given the fact that I talked to just eight customers.

Moreover, since the main limitation of my study is the size of the business or the limited scope of ownership, I think a new research should be done that can embody the large corporations in the experience industry to view if the outcome of the research will be different.

Finally, in their Masters thesis, Jugård & Modig (2009) discuss the meaning and use of authenticity in the experience industry by researching some concept restaurants. The research concluded that using concepts or themes in operating restaurants will lead to success in business. The research helped to partly answer the question on how best to create this memorable experience that is satisfying and receptive to the five senses since my research concludes that companies in the experience industry need to add aesthetic value to their services in order to create a good experience. Giving concepts and living up to them is a starting point but a lot more has to be done. Further research can focus more on creating the right environment and the different means of satisfying stakeholders that will give for satisfactory experiences. Since they do not need to work as hard on building a good image as other industries and yet the bad companies within the industry still lose out to the more influential ones, research should focus on how to satisfy customers within the experience industry.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF FIGURES