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**corporate sponsorship and social marketing
in a crisis situation**

**case: the NUTAGRA company during the
covid 19 crisis**

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ABSTRACT

Through a qualitative approach and with the help of semi-structured interviews carried out with a typical sample of six people working in NUTAGRA's corporate marketing department, this work addresses the issue of corporate sponsorship and social marketing in crisis.

The objective of this study is to discuss the relationship between the actions of patronage, social responsibility and the integration of companies into society, especially in difficult times.

Keywords: patronage; social marketing; Social Action; crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Patronage is considered as a means of communication allowing the company to participate in the common operation. And like any communication activity, it affects the image and reputation of the company. Relying on communication tools, such as institutional communication to promote the image of an institution and event communication to enhance the company's brand within the framework of organized activities.

Today, sponsorship contributes to the consolidation of projects and the sustainability of beneficiaries' activities, but it is also a tremendous opportunity for companies in terms of image and social responsibility, as well as the development of visibility and enhancement of the brand image. It corresponds to financial, material or human support provided by a company to a beneficiary general-interest organization without expecting an equivalent return.

Sponsorship is an action widely used during emergencies and needs, namely the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Since 2019, COVID-19 has suddenly entered our lives, disrupting family life, social life and working life around the world.

Indeed, the pandemic is a difficult situation to manage and an unprecedented experience for everyone without exception. In Algeria, this pandemic has experienced several waves. The third wave that appeared during the 2021 summer season was particularly dangerous, with increasingly worrying contamination figures and considerably increased death rates.

In addition, during this wave, Algeria was faced with a shortage of oxygen, whether for individuals or for the majority of hospitals at the national level, due to some stock management and distribution problems.

Faced with this situation of upheaval, companies felt obliged to intervene both to support the sick and their parents and to bring relief to society on the one hand, and on the other hand to set themselves apart from the other businesses by becoming more integrated into society. This is the case of the company NUTAGRA, active in the agricultural sector in Béjaia.

During the third wave, this company made many donations to support society in this crisis. These donations vary between medicines, disinfectant gels and financial support to provide oxygen concentrators for hospitals in the region. Citizens in general and the parents of patients appreciated this gesture of support and accompaniment by the company in response to the needs of society in particular.

With the aim of discussing the relationship between the actions of patronage and the social marketing of companies in crisis situations, this study attempts to answer the following main question:

How do sponsorship actions contribute to the company's social marketing in a crisis situation?

The objective of the research is twofold. The first step is to understand the importance of sponsorship actions to support society in situations of need. Secondly, analyze the role played by sponsorship in the integration of companies into society and discuss their social responsibility in the context of their social marketing. It is important to note that this present work was carried out thanks to the efforts and the involvement of two graduate students in information and communication sciences, communication and public relations options: TABOURI Yasmine and SOUALMI Houria.

2. Question the concepts of the study:

2.1 Patronage:

Patronage is defined as: financial, human or material support given by a company or an individual for an action or activity of general interest (cultural, research, humanitarian) without expecting a direct counterpart (ARRAOU, 2017). A specific form of financial or material support, sponsorship, allows certain companies, associations or even individuals to obtain economic resources without having to pay a counterpart in advance (ARRAOU, 2017).

In the present study, sponsorship consists of financial or material aid, a form of unrequited donation, provided by the company NUTAGRA, which acted as a sponsor during an oxygen shortage. The NUTAGRA company has supported the company financially and materially to support the supply of oxygen concentrators, to provide hospitals with medicines and antiseptic gels. In this

case, sponsorship is an excellent way for the NUTAGRA Company to connect with company projects that directly or indirectly allow them to increase its visibility and notoriety. Thus, it allows this company to maintain and improve its image with regard to society.

2.2 Social action:

Social action is a set of programs and instruments implemented by the State and local authorities to maintain social cohesion and help the most vulnerable people regain or maintain their autonomy (toupictionnaire). It tends to promote autonomy and individual protection, social cohesion, the exercise of citizenship within an inter-ministerial framework to prevent exclusion and correct its effects.

It is based on a permanent assessment of the needs and expectations of members of all social categories, in particular the disabled and the elderly, vulnerable groups and families, in precarious or poor situations, and grants them benefits. In cash or in kind. It is implemented by the State, local authorities and their public establishments, social security bodies, associations and social and medico-social establishments (toupictionnaire).

2.3 Social marketing:

Social marketing is the use of commercial marketing techniques to audiences affected by social, cultural or environmental issues (Dictionnaire).

Social marketing is a technique that gives the public the freedom to make decisions and choices: to accept, reject, abandon or modify behavior that is in their interest or that of the group. In this process, it is necessary to identify the needs of each client to find the best way to reach them. This is why for successful implementation of social marketing, segmentation is very important. It would therefore be easier to detect the best strategy since it could treat each group differently (Kotler, sans date)

In our case study, social marketing reflects all the social actions that the NUTAGRA Company has undertaken to help society overcome the oxygen shortage in a health crisis. Social marketing allows companies to integrate into society and aims to improve their image and positioning in the market.

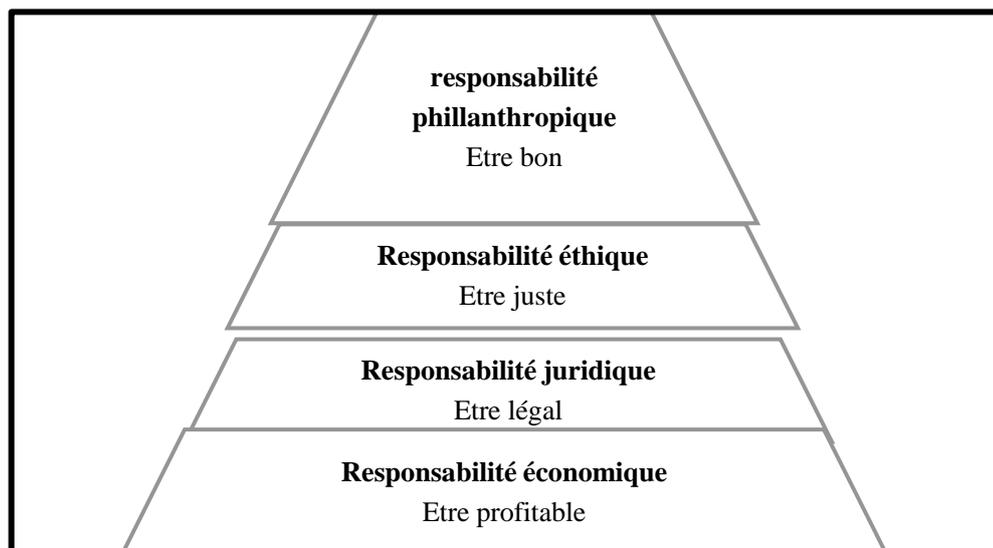
2.4. Corporate social responsibility:

Corporate social responsibility is an extremely broad concept that brings together a set of definitions that will make it possible to understand and delimit the social duties and responsibilities of companies, whether public or private.

According to Jean Marie PERITTI, CSR is defined as: “a moral obligation for the company to take into account the consequences of its activities on members of civil society” (Marie, 2001). Corporate social responsibility refers to the voluntary integration of companies' ecological and social concerns into their commercial activities and their relations with their stakeholders (staff, customers, shareholders, partners, local authorities, suppliers) in order to meet legal obligations. Also to invest in human capital and in the environment (IGALENS Jaques, 2002).

Social responsibility today is a concept in which companies integrate social, environmental, and economic concerns in their activities and in their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis, to ensure their survival in a society where it is no longer matter of fault.

According to Carroll (1979), there are four categories of responsibility that the company must ensure and which are represented in the form of a pyramid and classified in order of importance:



Source: CAPRON Michel, 2007, page 32

3. The theoretical and methodological approach:

3.1 The theoretical approach:

A theoretical approach is used to frame and identify the research framework. Its objective is to guide the researcher in his research process and guide him in the process of analyzing the data and results of the phenomenon studied.

This work is based on the approach of social marketing, which is defined as "the use of commercial marketing techniques to promote the adoption of a behavior that will improve the health or well-being of the target audience or society in general" (N.K.Weinreich., 1999).

The history of social marketing began in 1952. At the time the American sociologist GERHARD WIEBE proposed the use of corporate marketing techniques for non-profit projects. However, it was not until 1971, thanks to an article by famed Harvard University professors of marketing, PHILIP KOTLER and GERALD ZALTMAN that the words "marketing" and "social" really came together. They contributed to the foundation of the principles of this discipline intended for social causes (Kotler, sans date).

The choice of the social marketing approach for carrying out this study is justified by the study of social sponsorship actions maintained by the company during the oxygen shortage and to analyze to what extent this helped it. To integrate into society. This approach is the most suitable in the sense that the sponsorship actions maintained by the NUTAGRA Company reflect its commitment to support society in a crisis characterized by a significant oxygen shortage. As a result and by the fact of providing the necessary equipment and means in the midst of a crisis, it is proof of the company's social responsibility and a means of its integration into society.

3.2 Research materials and method:

There are many and various methods of research in the humanities and social sciences, and, generally, it is the subject and the size of the sample that determine the method to be used. The nature of this research theme, which focuses on: sponsorship and social marketing of the NUTAGRA Company at the time of the oxygen shortage, which aims to analyze qualitative dimensions,

requires the adoption of a qualitative research method.

It is a question of establishing the meaning of the remarks collected by basing itself more on the study of cases or of small numbers of individuals. Qualitative methods aim to collect unquantified data. In other words, through qualitative methods, the researcher tries to understand the meaning of the remarks, the behaviors observed (Mauris, 1995). The choice of this method is justified by the objective of the study, which essentially aims to explain qualitatively how the company NUTAGRA conducted its social marketing from its sponsorship activities at the time of the oxygen shortage. .

The field research was conducted using a semi-structured interview. It is the most suitable type in scientific research because it allows you to collect open answers with data that can be used and analyzed to answer the original question. This research tool is made up of 18 questions divided into four main axes: the first axis was devoted to the civility and characteristics of each person interviewed. The second axis of the interview guide focused on the importance of social marketing for companies. The third axis addresses the issue of sponsorship as a means of social marketing. While the fourth axis gathers the questions that question the relationship between patronage and the insertion of the company in society.

The step of selecting the elements of the population to constitute the sample is an important and indispensable phase for any research. It is a question of delimiting the target population and carefully choosing the necessary sample in delimitation which allows us to evaluate and observe in a practical angle the subject of the study. In this work, a sample of six people was interviewed : Mr BELFOU Mounir "Head of Finance and Accounting Department (FC)", Mr MALA Abdelali "Head of Sales and Marketing Department (CM)", Mr BENZERAD Sofiane "In charge of foreign trade", Mr MEZIANE Lamine "In charge of sales and invoicing", Miss ZIZI Malika "In charge of marketing and communication", Mr NAMIR Yacine "In charge of advertising".

For the selection of the sample of the study, we carried out a typical sampling. In typical sampling, all items chosen to be part of the sample appear as models of the population under study (Mauris, 1995). It is about intentionally choosing the units of the sample so that they meet the research

objectives.

Before engaging in the field survey, a period of one month was devoted to conducting a pre-survey on two angles: theoretical angle and practical angle. The pre-survey period was organized mainly in two stages: 1. Documentary research by repetitive consultation of printed and electronic works dealing with the issue of corporate sponsorship and social marketing. 2. A visit and observation of the field: As the second stage of the pre-survey in order to explore the field and the selection of the sample of our study to see the degree of its availability and its aptitude to serve the study of relevant information for a better exploitation of the research question. The final survey stage of the research represents the official practical step in which data collection through interviews with the selected sample was carried out.

4. Analysis of interview data:

As indicated in the methodological approach, precisely in the sampling stage, the selection of the study sample was made in the typical reasoned way. It is made up of senior executives from the NUTAGRA Company who answered the questions of the semi-structured interview. The analysis of the answers given by the respondents and their confrontation with existing theoretical data in the literature reviews make it possible to classify the ideas of discussion and to read the results through the elaboration of texts formulated mainly by the data collected from the respondents. This data has been broken down into themes, categories and indicators organized in an established analysis grid. The data analysis work is organized into three main axes:

4.1. The Importance of Social Marketing for Business:

The interviews carried out with Mr. MALA Abdelali , head of the sales and marketing department and Miss ZIZI Malika, in charge of marketing and communication within the NUTAGRA company, made it possible to define their vision of social marketing. These frameworks define social marketing as a means of using commercial marketing techniques to improve the well-being of the target audience or society in general. Their definition which agrees with the definitions of the literature for the concept of social marketing applied to enterprises and which refers to the use of the principle of enterprise marketing to improve the well-being of people and the environment in which they live.

It is a long-term and well-planned approach to changing human behavior, it is based on four principles used in business marketing : product, price, place and promotion (N.K.Weinreich., 1999).

According to the two respondents, the social marketing of the company is essential in the sense that it plays a very important role, especially for companies in the private sector. It is considered as a way to increase the degree of their knowledge. Indeed, it is thanks to the actions of social marketing that the company creates an indispensable place within society on a national scale, thus it has become known much more compared to previous years.

According to the six respondents in our study population, companies should be socially responsible, firstly, because they consider citizens as the inspiration and wealth of the company, and they value the end consumer considered as an essential customer. In addition, very important factor. For the latter, it is important for the company to value the social layer, that is to say the citizens who are also customers of the company. Secondly, the personnel of the company came from the social stratum so if the company contributes to the society, it helps to reduce and decrease the unemployment rate in a society. It is with social marketing and good social integration that a business promotes its reputation and further increases its profitability of the business.

It is clear that society is the inspiration and strength of the company. Apart from the value of the message conveyed in social marketing and the support of social causes, this branch of marketing can also be the subject of certain corporate and branding strategies. Companies can actually use this type of marketing to: rebuild their reputation, renew, redefine or broaden their targeting; social marketing is indeed a way to surround the company with a positive image and to draw a line under any previous missteps.

The interview with the interviewees makes it possible to identify the different types of social marketing that the NUTAGRA Company uses, they are represented as follows: the company financially sponsors sports teams such as the Tichy club, MOB, CRBA (AOKAS), the celebration of a few symbolic days such as March 8, which represents Women's Day. In addition, the NUTAGRA Company chooses a form of sponsorship to organize events and seminars in certain regions such as Sétif, Biskra, Oran and Bejaïa and other regions on the

national territory. The effectiveness of these forms of social marketing, according to respondents, is reflected in a sharp increase in demand for the company's products and development in recent years.

4.2. Patronage as a means of social marketing:

As it was approached at the beginning in the problem and in the objective of the study, the interest of this work is to describe the actions of the patronage adopted by the company and its contribution to the social marketing and the promotion of its place in the society. The concept of sponsorship, as defined by the interviewees, corresponds to a means of institutional communication within the company and a means that opens up the space to multiple communications, thus promoting more effective dialogue. Indeed, according to the respondents, sponsorship, although it is a means of institutional and event communication, is an operation that is part of the objective of improving the social aspect of the company on the one hand, and to fulfill the duty to serve and contribute to sustainable development in different ways.

Patronage is considered by our respondents as an important activity that allows interesting activities to be held thanks to the company's involvement in social life. This corporate commitment allows it to have a good brand image and a good long-term reputation. This, because the action of patronage exerts itself strongly with the external environment of the company especially the associations which are regarded as an intermediary which intervenes and plays a dominating role in the integration of the company NUTAGRA in the operation social.

Thus, their actions within the framework of sponsorship are considered as an internal and external strategic approach of the company to ensure consistency in its projects, in the enhancement of its image and the development of its positioning. For this, the participants in this work consider sponsorship as the best way to communicate with the external environment through a communication process based on the principle of participating and acting. Indeed, respondents explain that the notoriety and reputation developed through sponsorship actions helps the company to promote its brand image more internally than externally.

It can be seen, through the respondents' answers to the interview

questions, that the sponsorship approach within the NUTAGRA Company is part of a global internal and external strategic approach. In fact, the forms of sponsorship adopted internally are mainly: aid granted to employees, in the event of the marriage/death of a relative, in the event of illness (sometimes the company helps employees to pay treatment costs but according to the financial capacity of the company). Therefore, the company takes into consideration the situation of employees, and according to respondents, the company provides aids for employees on different occasions, such as Eid Al-adha and the holy month (Ramadan). As for the patronage intended for the outside, it consists of: the allocation of aid to the poor, to sports associations and this in direct contact or through an intermediary. It appears that the company NUTAGRA sponsors all forms of sponsorship, whether financially, by products, by equipment. Through these important actions of sponsorship that the company NUTAGRA makes, it engages in several contributions through financial aid from social parties and humanitarian aid.

According to the sponsorship actions of the NUTAGRA Company and according to the various data collected from the respondents in the field, it is clear that sponsorship is a social and humanitarian initiative. Indeed, the objective of the company NUTAGRA during these sponsorship actions is above all to transmit its human and cultural values. It is a question of transmitting a message to society, which means that the NUTAGRA Company is present at each social event organized for the benefit of society.

Patronage is widely used in emergency and crisis situations in which citizens feel the need for help and support. During the health crisis caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the lives of individuals and families have been turned upside down. Faced with this situation of upheaval characterized by concern, fear and incomprehension, companies have undertaken to intervene to support, assist and meet the needs of individuals and health institutions involved in the fight against the coronavirus.

They attempt both to relieve the sick and bring relief to society. The company NUTAGRA, in this case, responded to the call of citizens in distress during the third wave of the pandemic which reached its peak in the summer of 2020. According to the respondents, in this crisis, the company NUTAGRA intervened to help the health establishments, which suffered from the shortage of oxygen, and to provide them with the oxygen extractors,

medicines and the various equipment necessary for the care of the sick.

4.3. Patronage and the integration of the company into society during the coronavirus crisis:

According to the head of the finance and accounting department: "NUTAGRA was ready to take responsibility for the health crisis that affected society and to get involved in saving people's lives" (enquêté1, 2022).

In this sense, the company NUTAGRA has started to buy sewing machines in order to sew medical bibs to distribute them at the level of health centers in the following regions; Aokas, Tichy and Kherrata, thus equipping them with cleaning products such as disinfectant gels. In addition, the NUTAGRA Company helped the Aokas hospital center to obtain oxygen supplies by purchasing an oxygen station, and they chose the French equipment because of its availability and ease of use. Indeed, health centers in the Sahel have benefited from this station.

According to the respondents, the contribution was a bit difficult due to the financial impact of the companies, which were also affected by the crisis. A respondent explains: "despite this health crisis, NUTAGRA has helped society as much as possible and has succeeded in its objective which is to help control the situation, meet the needs of society and stand out from other companies by assuming its social responsibility".

For the interviewees, it is thanks to the sponsorship actions already maintained that the NUTAGRA Company has made itself better known, through the actions taken that, the company's turnover has changed, and the demand for its products has increased. In addition, the media coverage of its actions by the official television channel "BERBER TV" which moved to SARL NUTAGRA to carry out interviews with the business manager Mr. ZIZI Farid and the dissemination of the company's contributions on social networks have highlighted the humanitarian actions carried out by this company.

5. Discussion of the results:

The communication of results in scientific research methods aims to make known the different results obtained. These results cannot be obtained without a very precise comparison with existing data and theoretical

knowledge. This means the importance of discussing the results with reference to the theoretical approaches employed in similar research. It should be remembered that the references collected during the methodological and theoretical approach make it possible to compare the results of the research and to compare them with other results obtained in works that have already dealt with the question of patronage in Algerian companies:

Based on the previous study already made on the sponsorship and social responsibility of the two companies Cevital and General Emballage. Some Algerian companies patronize at will without a plan or precise strategy, even if they are firmly committed to society in the framework of charity, they do not know that sponsorship is a whole process to follow, which is why the act of sponsorship is still a culture to be mastered. (SELLAMI Lotfi, MESLEM Hichem, Sponsorship and corporate social responsibility, master's degree in SIC, communication and public relations option, university of béjaia , academic year 2018/2019). Indeed, this work has succeeded in finding a company that has developed all of its strategy and sponsorship actions within a coordinated framework and a well-defined structure, based on standards and benchmarks to follow.

According to the field respondents, the NUTAGRA company sponsors externally with all the local communities, which testifies to its social commitment, as well as it is a company that uses the association as an intermediary in these transactions through sponsorship. We also found that the NUTAGRA company does sponsorship in various forms, whether in kind or internal and external funding and skills.

Our research process, in its final stage, also enabled us through our various interviews with the employees of the NUTAGRA Company to draw several results. That our sample represents a single company that registers its activities in all aspects: economic, environmental, cultural and social. It is thanks to this opportunity that we were able to have the chance and the possibility of bringing together and collecting ample scientific information on the theme of corporate sponsorship and social marketing.

The company NUTAGRA counts among its strategy of management and management, a considerable importance granted to patronage and social

marketing. For example, we learned that the company distributes baskets during each Ramadan in all regions of the municipality of Aokas. It is important to say, at the end of our interviews, that the NUTAGRA Company relies on social responsibility and plans its improvements, aiming to better serve society.

The results of this research allow us to say that the relationship between the two variables: Patronage and Social Marketing is favorable according to the answers of our respondents, that patronage is an action with a totally social trait which makes it an important contribution for the development of social marketing as well as the social insertion of the company in society.

4. CONCLUSION

According to the results obtained in the field, it is found that:

Patronage is considered an important activity, allowing companies to have interesting activities that meet the needs of society especially in crisis situations.

Patronage action is closely linked to the company's external environment. Associations occupy a primordial place, they can play the role of intermediary between companies and society.

Sponsorship actions are considered as a strategic approach both internal and external to the company to ensure consistency between its image and its reputation. For this, sponsorship is a better way for the company to communicate with the external environment, to engage and act in times of need through a communication process.

The usefulness of sponsorship on the social marketing of the company is reflected in the positive image built thanks to the efforts and actions of sponsorship maintained on the ground in response to the needs expressed by the citizens.

Finally, it is desirable that all Algerian companies take into account the important subject such as "patronage" and improve their culture around its working method, in particular to practice it and try to develop it, and that companies must be aware its added value of the sponsorship approach, especially in crises.

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