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Intelligence Service Marketing: Myth or Reality

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Abstract

Intelligence and security issues have become increasingly important today due to a multiplication of dimensions and unpredictability of threats. A nontraditional area of deployment for marketing science is national intelligence. Intelligence services are using marketing concepts in order to adapt to the ever changing conditions and gain advantage over other intelligence services. However there is some confusion in adapting marketing elements such as product, price and competition to intelligence. Another problem is how to make the inherent secrecy of intelligence compatible with such marketing actions as launching product(s), informing and persuading users. Real life examples of intelligence marketing however reveal that intelligence services have overcome, to a certain extent, such difficulties by sharing information in a controlled manner. This study investigates intelligence service marketing from different perspectives by various examples.

Keywords: Intelligence service marketing, intelligence product, information, case officer

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1. Introduction

Intelligence is the front line of national defense (Scott, 2007) and a more cost effective way of protecting the nation from the internal and external existing threats than entering a war as stated by Sun Tzu 2500 years ago (Hulnick, 2004). It will certainly be influenced by strategic, tactical and technological changes in our globalizing and changing world (Devine, 2008). Intelligence has become an academic discipline for fifty years since the first publication of Strategic Intelligence for American Foreign Policy by Sherman Kent (Scott and Jackson 2004). It is based on solid theoretical foundations (Kahn, 2001). Today, intelligence and security issues have become vitally important both for international politics and for societies (Culliffo et al., 2001). Since existing threats stem from different sources, intelligence needs to have a large vision (Berkowitz, 2001).

The intelligence theory can be examined methodologically in different ways and perspectives. Intelligence is the process of collecting, analyzing and making ready the

information obtained from open and secret sources necessary for authorities of a country to decide on a certain issue (Hulnick, 2004). This process involves the pre-determination of behavioral patterns, motivation and capacity of target individuals, groups or states (Adams, 1997). Intelligence is a tool to establish a suitable protection against foreign policies. It is related to the internal security and power of the state (Scott, 2007). Intelligence can be examined in three parts, namely strategic part, tactical part and counter-intelligence, that is, resisting against and foiling foreign intelligence efforts (Hulnick, 2004; Donovan, 1960).

One of the nontraditional fields where marketing is conceptually and functionally employed is intelligence. Intelligence services use marketing concepts in order to adapt to the changing conditions and establish advantage over other services. However there are dilemmas on adapting the marketing concepts such as product, rise and competition to the nature of intelligence. Another problem is how to make the inherent secrecy of intelligence compatible with such marketing actions as launching product(s), informing and persuading users. They also need to manage perception by the public in general who will agree, or not, to their vast budgets. They need moreover to convince policy-makers of their capabilities, and to continue to fund them. The differentiation between marketing to gain sources, and marketing to influence the domestic public, is not made throughout, those these are vastly different concepts. Real life examples of intelligence marketing however reveal that intelligence services have overcome, to a certain extent, such difficulties by sharing information in a controlled manner. In other words, the information shared with others does not harm the intelligence service and serves the purpose of informing and persuading the target market. This is clearly illustrated in John F. Kennedy's statement in "the debacle of the Bay of Pigs" in 1961: 'You always assume that the military and intelligence people have some secret skill not available to ordinary mortals'. Namier made the same emphasis as 'Legends naturally surround all "secret service"; its very name inspires fear and distrust and stimulates men's imagination – it is believed to be wise and wicked, efficient and powerful' (Hughes, 2008). The existing conditions force the intelligence services to share information in order to gain advantage over their rivals and show themselves more powerful and successful than they actually are.

2. Conceptual Framework

Intelligence marketing shows parallelism with traditional marketing as regards to understanding, collecting information about and establishing communication with the customers. At this point it is obvious that intelligence marketing needs consumer survey, market segmentation and brand management. Intelligence marketing is the use of traditional marketing techniques in order to devise programs necessary to make the target market to acquire the attitudes and behaviors desired by the intelligence services. In other words it is the use of marketing theories in order to reach the intelligence target market. This includes all the techniques to define the target market, show their difference compared to their rivals and obtain the necessary information with the minimum cost. The biggest difference from the traditional marketing strategies is that the main goal here is to have the target market acquire certain behaviors rather than sell products or make profits. Intelligence marketing activities are similar to those of psychological operations (PSYOPS) activities started by the US government after September 11 attacks. PSYOPS serves the purpose of motivating the foreign target governments, organizations and groups to support the US political goals (Lamb and Genalis, 2005). It also works to isolate the terrorist groups from the society, prevent them from obtaining any support and reduce their capacity to finance their operations and training activities.

The basis of traditional marketing exchange theory is that the reason for people to establish relations is obtaining the real or the perceived maximum value with the minimum cost (Sam et al., 2005). From this point on, we will examine intelligence marketing in different aspects and make suggestions for the future and make evaluations related to the target market, marketing mix elements and the brand. The examples of the study were chosen from the web pages of various intelligence services and the news about them appearing in the media.

2.1. Target Market

Terrorists today can easily hide within the society. It is obvious that intelligence services should be proactive in detecting the hidden threats and collecting information about them. This shows the necessity of different operational organizations and methodologies (Berkowitz, 2002). In espionage operations called as HUMINT (human Intelligence) it takes quite long time to find the suitable people furnished with necessary skills and knowledge for being a secret agent. The

sophisticated technological equipment does not at all times assist secret services. For instance the US failed to help the UK in the Falkland War because all of her satellites were programmed to monitor the Soviet Union. This is also the case for open source intelligence (OSINT). This is counter espionage to protect the secrets of the country or obtaining secret information about other countries, the informants are of great importance for counter espionage. These people are not secret agents but the ones who inform the related institution about the cases which they find unusual. For instance the managers of a flight training school warned the FBI about a Middle Eastern man with suspicious activities who came to the school before September 11th (Hulnick, 2006). The importance of the informants as regards to the target market of the intelligence marketing is very obvious.

The target market of intelligence marketing is the people in and outside the intelligence business. The first category of such people includes those secret agents of other countries who may provide valuable information in return of asylum, financial gain or protection. The other targeted people are those normal people who are not agents but used as the staff by the intelligence organization and provide information to them for once or on continuing basis. The basic strategy employed for these two types of markets is the establishment of trust as stated by interactive marketing and social exchange theories. Trust is an indispensable factor for every institution. The parties of the information exchange are focused on the long term gains rather than short term expectation and risks (Atuahene-Gima and Haiyang, 2002).

The importance of the trust for intelligence marketing has been explained by Zucker (1986). In process-based trust, there is confidence established based upon the brand name, reputation obtained. At this point, intelligence services employ certain strategies directed to the target market. The Czech Republic expresses the importance it accords to its community as follows in their web site: “The purpose and goal of this communication is to “e-demonize” the Service and convince the public that its *raison d’être* is to protect the citizens and act in their interest. In many cases, BIS cannot do without public support, and the more citizens it has on its side the more successful it will be.” FSB promises the protection, money and secrecy to the prospective agents with the motto of “be a spy” internet. FBI and CIA open their channels to the possible informants and prepare special pages for the children in order to establish brand awareness. The Czech Republic stresses the importance of trust as follows: “Its creed is faithfulness to democratic values, the Constitution and the laws of the Czech Republic. It

attaches extraordinary importance to communicating with the public, as it could hardly fulfill its mission without its support, and highly appreciates any help with which it is provided in protecting democracy, freedom and national security”. Many of the intelligence services such as Mossad of Israel, DGSE of France, EYP of Greece, BND of Germany and AISE of Italy provided language options in their web sites in order to reach the target market more easily. Austrian secret service, ASIO, established a Business Liaison Unit (BLU) which provides a public interface between the ASIO and Austrian business.

2.2. Product

The products supplied in the field of intelligence are organizational power, reliability, protection and persuasion. In contrast to the products in commercial marketing, the product marketed here is opinion. It serves to create of awareness and behavioral changes in the people. For instance, normal people are expected to report any dubious activities to the authorities while some special people are expected to provide continuous information to secret services. At this point, the services provide direction, encouragement and reliability. The website of Jordan describes the product as follows : “The task of preserving national security is a shared responsibility, especially since terrorist threats are indiscriminate by nature. Therefore, if you happen to have information about a potential threat to our national security, we would like to hear from you as the information you have may help us ward off the threat and ensure continued personal safety” (www.gid.gov.jo). Today the secret services have to act as ambitious marketing managers who market their products in this competitive medium rather than giving people passive roles (L’etang, 1998). This gives important clues how they would like to show themselves to the public. For instance, CIA provides a computer tour of CIA.

The attribution theory which says that the motivations of organizations are shaped by the reactions of consumers gives important guidance related to this concept. Ellen et al. (2006) classified attribution types as value driven and strategic motives. Strategic motives stress that there are no undeserved gains while value driven motives emphasize the organizational stability (Samu and Wymer, 2009). CIA emphasizes this point. The CIA’s website states: ‘We must take responsibility for our actions and decisions’ (Bean, 2009). Similarly, the Kenyan secret service expresses their vision as follows in its web site: “To create, manage and sustain an organization that is both professional and accountable; founded on firm ethics...”. According to Fombrun

(1996), corporate credibility is one dimension of corporate reputation and represents the degree to which consumers, investors, and other constituents believe in the company's trustworthiness and expertise. The Austrian intelligence service describes itself by four words: excellence, integrity, cooperation, accountability. Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) found that corporate credibility exerted a very strong effect on attitudes toward a company's brand. The influence of corporate credibility was found to have a direct effect on attitudes toward the brand and the purchase intentions (Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell, 2000).

Similarly in Schultz's three dimensional theory of interpersonal behavior states that FIRO (Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation) is motivated by three basic needs namely inclusion, affection and control. The need to belong to a certain group is frequently stressed in the web pages of secret services (Schultz, 1966). The Kenyan secret service described itself by three adjectives: available, reliable, and capable. The CIA defines its organizational culture in terms of 'integrity', 'teamwork', 'total participation', 'innovation', 'adaptation', 'accountability', and 'continuous improvement'. Also in conjunction with this theory are statements of its employees with their own words in the CIA web pages. The statement at the top of the page is in full accord with the need of inclusion. "We invite you to get to know the men and women of the CIA. They are all Americans who have taken on the important mission of protecting their nation. But they are also your neighbors, youth league coaches and the person in front of you in the shopping line. They went to the same schools you did, and come from a background as diverse as the nation they serve." This stresses both the need of inclusion of the people and carrying out positive introduction of CIA.

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to define the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors (Teo and Yu, 2005). When we look at the web pages of the secret services, they all have logos and some of them explain what they mean (e.g. Turkish Intelligence Service (MIT), CIA, and Lebanon intelligence service). CIA which wants to establish brand awareness at early ages makes the following explanation the children: "You may have heard about the Central Intelligence Agency. But, do you know what we really do and how we do it? The people of the CIA do very important work. They help keep our country safe. They give our leaders the necessary information so they can make good decisions. And they take pride in their important jobs. We have a lot of different jobs

here. We have analysts, doctors, lawyers, scientists, geographers, and librarians, to name just a few.” There are various issues shown at the back pages which may appeal to the children (the introduction of K9 dogs and various games). There are various supporting services for the teachers to prepare their educational plans by the use of CIA web page.

The compatibility of the organizational vision with brand and the belief of the customers in the brand is very important. Brand image plays an important role in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of customers (Tapp, 1996). The establishment of the reliability and the identity of the brand on solid basis (Tapp, 1996) are necessary for the introduction of the organizational values to the stakeholders the change of the opinions of the society, construction of the confidence and attaining the targets. In this intensive competitive medium (Noble et al., 2002), intelligence services are to be in compatible with the brand oriented organizations regarding their attitudes and actions (Hankinson, 2001). It has been suggested that, when there is congruence between the brand and the cause, consumers are more likely to respond favorably (Hamlin and Wilson, 2004). Therefore, it is likely that congruence will allow the brand to generate positive returns, whereas a non-congruent relationship may even be detrimental to the brand (Gray, 2000; Hamlin & Wilson, 2004). An endorsement will be more reliable and enhance the image of the brand when relevant characteristics in the image or function of the cause match the perceived image or functions of the brand (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999).

2.3. Price

The ultimate goal of an intelligence service is to maintain the informants providing information and the provision of information to aid decision-makers. There are people who possess the information at one side of the intelligence market and the intelligence service which would like to obtain such information on the other. The informants buy the product provided by the intelligence services by giving the information to the intelligence services. The motto of the Italian intelligence service is "Arcana intellego" (understanding hidden things). The verb "intellego", which literally means "I comprehend" evokes the noble root of intelligence, a discipline aimed at unraveling mysteries and holds in itself a constant tension directed to its final goal: knowledge. The second goal of the intelligence services is to make such effect on the people as to change their attitudes and opinions and opt for the product they provide. Giving information is one part of the change. The other part is the satisfaction derived from it. The fact

that the person becomes intimate with the service he or she gives information is an important sign of change. Here, the question is not an economic value but the relation with the economically based transaction cost theory. The costs involved in such transaction-related activities are called transaction costs (Teo and Yu, 2005). The basic principle of TCE is that people like to conduct transactions in the most economic way. The success or the failure of the service to which the information is given affects the future of the informant. The price paid includes these as well, and this can be regarded as cost paid by the society. In other words the cost of the intelligence includes the cost of the information plus the opportunity costs.

2.4. Place

Since intelligence marketing is not based on physical products, buyers cannot claim any possession on them. The rational use of communication tools is very important for the rational transportation of the product to the target market. In other words, the communication tools are not only necessary for the maintenance but also for the distribution of the products. The application through a web page creates locational convenience. For instance FBI gives the following information in its web page. “The FBI has 56 field offices centrally located in major metropolitan areas across the U.S. and Puerto Rico. We also maintain about 400 resident agencies in smaller cities and towns across the nation. Each field office is overseen by a Special Agent in Charge, except our offices in Los Angeles, New York City, and Washington, D.C., which are managed by an Assistant Director in Charge due to their large size.” They give the locations of their field offices on the map indicating the zip codes.

2.5. Promotion

Effective promotion means effective communication. Intelligence services try to influence the behaviors and attitudes of people by giving information to them. The media constitutes the backbone of the intelligence marketing. At this point, the Internet has an undisputable role in marketing (Grunig, 1992). The Internet enables the services to reach diversified environments without big costs (Poddar et al, 2009). The compatibility of the messages is very important in this process. The effectiveness or the use of the message is related to the degree of behavioral or attitude changes achieved (Elliott, 1993). The effectiveness of the message indicates its acceptability (Witte, 1992). The acceptability of the message is measured

by the intention of the people to comply with its proposals (Witte, 1992, 1994). A compatible, clear and consistent communication is the very foundation of the intelligence discipline (Hughes, 2008).

2.5.1. Personal Selling

In spite of the great advances in humanless systems, Human Intelligence is still one of the most important tools in gathering information (Dupont, 2003). The basis of espionage operations is using human resources for spying purposes. The people who find, train and assign the duty to these people are the case officers. The case officers direct these people for intelligence operations rather than carrying the action themselves (Whittaker, 2008). The strategic role of case officers who are in constant contact with the target market cannot be disputed (Hartline et al., 2000). They form the tie between the target market and the organization. They represent the organization and carry out communication (Bettencourt and Brown, 2003). This was the case (Marcus and House, 1973) in the efforts of Hoover to promote the image of the FBI agents (Hughes, 2008). According to Blau (1964) the social exchange theory is based upon the comparison of the utility-cost analysis and the alternatives between the parties. The case officers give the necessary information to the target market, make comments and bargain for the information at one side and tell the customer to the service at the other (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1992).

2.5.2. Public Relations

The popular culture has been playing an important role on the attitude of the society and the government towards intelligence activities since the Franco–German War of 1871. At that time, the French had a spy mania with the spying stories of the German agents led by Wilhelm Stieber. Introduction and social relation activities are of great importance for the promotion of the image of the intelligence services in the eyes of the target market. In 1935 alone, there were 65 movies on FBI. All of them depicted FBI agents as heroes with gun in their hands fighting to solve the cases. Weiner explains the success of CIA in social relations as follows: “In spite of all the terrible mistakes CIA made throughout the years, its biggest success was its capacity to conceal all these perpetual mistakes”. We can therefore talk about mythmakers for CIA since all the books and Hollywood films are full of the stories depicting CIA agents as the courageous and refined men and women who carry out unbelievable operations.

Starting from 1930s, movies about the British and American secret agents also books started to come into our lives. The adventures of James Bond, American secret agents Matt Helm and Sam Durrell, British agent John Craig, Jonas Wilde, Harry Palmer, Quiller, the book and film 39 steps, novels of Le Quee filled our screens and books. The American TVs started to show the adventures of John Drake, Kelly Robinson and Alexander Scott and John Steed and Emma Peel on a weekly basis. From 1970s to date, the Israeli secret service Mossad has been the subject of many books and articles (e.g. Stewart Steven's *The Spymasters of Israel*, Wolf Blitzer's *Territory of Lies*, and Ian Black and Benny Morris's *Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services...*). The Israeli agents were the main guys in most of the movies (Richelson, 2007). Mossad maintains in its presence in this competition with movies like *Munich* and Gabriel Allon's books. The memoirs of the secret agents after retirement can also be regarded as introduction and public relations activities. Authors like Graham Greene, John Le Carré, Ian Fleming and Tom Clancy intensively used intelligence and secret services in their books. A more perplexing if intriguing relationship between reality and fiction is illustrated by the occasion recounted by Jeremy Black when the Soviet Polit-bureau issued instructions to the KGB to acquire the gadgetry displayed in the latest Bond film.

Fiction also illustrates specific ethical problems and dilemmas. How far an intelligence organization is prepared to risk or sacrifice its own 'side' in pursuit of a 'higher' objective is a popular theme, well illustrated in Le Carré's "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold". There are public relations offices in the intelligence services that carry out important activities. The Ukrainian secret service SZRU has a sub-unit called Veterans Fund serving the purpose "to contribute to foreign intelligence prestige". There is a part in the web page of British secret service MI5 entitled "myths and misunderstandings". The suggestion, for example, that the British state undertakes the murder of its citizens for political purposes is a familiar trope in popular representations of intelligence activity. The suggestion that Hilda Murrell, an elderly anti-nuclear protester, was killed by the security service in an operation against nuclear protesters gained surprising currency. MI5's website currently proclaims that 'We do not kill people or arrange their assassination'.

Similarly the Jordan secret service explains the purpose of the internet page as "there are a limited number of official intelligence web sites. GID has taken this step in compliance with its democratic process and we hope that we can contribute in changing the common stereotypical

impression many people have about intelligence organizations, which is in most cases very far from the truth". (<http://www.gid.gov.Jo/en/help.html>). FBI and CIA tell the past operations as stories in their web pages. MI5 explains the necessity of a website as follows: "This website is an important element of the Service's "openness policy". This policy, agreed by the Prime Minister and Home Secretary back in 1992, aims to improve public understanding of our role. The policy is, however, carefully controlled - we do not release any information which might compromise our sources and methods, as well as the security of our staff and agents." Some of the secret services publish the annual reports in the framework of introductory activities (Czech Republic). There is a corner at the web page of the Kazakhstan secret service where you can write your comments about the organization.

2.5.3. Advertisement

There are advertisements in the web pages of secret services in connection with the marketing of intelligence. The British secret service is using advertisement that mimicks real world billboards within Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Double Agent on x-Box Live and across a number of other games including Rainbow Six: Vegas, Need for Speed Carbon & Enemy Territory: Quake Wars. The campaign has been masterminded by digital recruitment strategists MI6, the British Secret Intelligence Service, have been using Facebook as a recruitment tool and also as an advertising tool (Newman, 2007). The spokesperson for the Government Communications HQ said that ads may help "plant the idea in the heads of younger players." This is a very effective way to choose the qualified personnel and reach the targeted media (Spiess, 2007). The NCS-sponsored Facebook group was launched on Dec. 19, 2006 and will stay active for two months. The group currently has over 2,100 members, up from around 200 one week after its debut (Bruce, 2007).

While Silverstein (2008) emphasizes that the paid commercials will not be enough to change the attitudes of people towards CIA, one should never underestimate the power of media. SVR takes videos and films to be shown on TV channels. FSB promises money, protection and confidentiality to the people who are prepared to be double agent in its web pages. Shabak shows the videos revealing its technological and operational skills coupled with the scenes from real operations. Similar videos can be found in the websites of FBI and CIA. The Canadian secret service explained the reasons why it was chosen as one of the most successful organizations in the country. The Ukrainian secret service put the pictures of the operations in its website and

shares the news related to its operation with other people. The Romanian secret service put “a terrorist threat level scale” in its web page. Similarly there is a part called “Current UK threat level” in the web pages of the British secret service MI5. The Austrian intelligence service put a National Counter-Terrorism Alert System in its web page. SRI distributes brochures introducing the service. The Italian secret service publishes a journal called AISI Gnosis four times a year.

2.5.4. Sales Promotion

The sales promotion activities frequently appear in the intelligence marketing efforts. SVR organizes a contest with a prize of 120,000 rubles for authors, artists and journalists who help promote the social cooperation between the service and the citizens. FBI puts the pictures and the information related to the most wanted criminals in its web page and promises substantial prizes for the people who give information about them (up to 5 million dollars).

3. Conclusion and Discussion

It is an undeniable fact that the intelligence has gained a paramount importance today. As Wesley Wark says “Learning to live with an open-ended “war on terrorism” will mean learning to live with intelligence”. Rathmell states that intelligence services have got to make radical conceptual and organizational changes and take radical steps in order to comply with the social, cultural and technological conditions of the 21st century. These are the parts of marketing the intelligence activities. Intelligence services use intelligence marketing in order to reach the target market. Intelligence services which effectively use the marketing techniques are steadily moving to become a brand.

The main idea of the article is that the current efforts made by intelligence agencies to market themselves to various groups with a view to improve their effectiveness. Looking roughly the target market of intelligence services are seen as governments, but also we can analyse from given examples that the real target market of intelligence services incline to community. Creating positive corporate image is underlying the marketing activities of intelligence services. This is reality because many different marketing tools are in use for this purpose. Making films with the story of intelligence services, moreover Turkish National Intelligence Organization’s advertisement for assistant specialist position are good examples for explaining target market

about marketing activities. By this means corporations try to integrate organizational activities with community.

In this article, the intelligence services' marketing efforts of very different countries were compared. So when comparing the intelligence services of the long-standing democracies (Anglo-Saxon for example) with those of a former Soviet-Bloc state (Czech Republic), those of a post-colonial state (Kenya), a Arab monarchy (Jordan), it is important to keep in mind that the kinds of reasons each state intelligence service is marketing for could be different.

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