

# The Influence of Factors on the Choice of Technologies and Instruments of a Political Leader's Image Management Model

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## Article Information

**Received:** January 18, 2023

**Accepted:** February 19, 2023

**Published:** March 20, 2023

**Keywords:** *image, political leader, methods, communications, PR-specialist, factors, pluralism, face-building and body-building*

## ABSTRACT

*The article presents a politician's image management model as a system consisting of elements that a political PR specialist must take into account when working on the image of his leader. This includes the following elements of the model: taking into account factors that affect the image of a political leader; selection of effective methods, technologies and tools for managing the image of a political leader; communication aspect in the use of selected methods, technologies and tools. These elements are interconnected, based on one element, the next one is selected. Based on the factors that have a greater impact on the image, it is necessary to choose the right methods and technologies that will be used within the image management.*

The formation of the image of a political leader is a laborious process, which becomes more complicated in the presence of international tension caused by crisis situations or phenomena. Political PR-specialists need to build the most correct strategy for creating the image of the political leader of the country in this period and be able to competently manage it using PR tools and communication channels.

In the modern world, the presence of hotbeds of tension increases every year, and this affects the image of the country's political leader. It is necessary to continue to work on it qualitatively, no matter what. International tension arises and develops for various reasons, one of which may be a crisis that affects several countries at the same time.

There are quite a lot of factors influencing the formation of the image of a political leader in conditions of international tension, in addition to the actual presence of tension itself.

Of course, to begin with, a PR specialist needs to take into account the "original" material with which to work, and these are the personal factors of a political leader that he can use and implement most of all in a period of international tension. In our opinion, these are: leadership qualities, including the availability of managerial skills and the ability to negotiate, rhetoric and contact with the audience, physical health, a high level of responsibility for decisions made; crisis management skills, including the presence of strategic thinking, and international negotiations; the ability to learn and grow from your own mistakes.

Secondly, it is the direct activity, initiative, activity of a political leader, which can be embodied through PR tools and communication aspects, thanks to the right choice of methods, technologies and tools for managing the image of a politician. In our opinion, the factors that have the greatest impact

and which should be relied upon when choosing methods, technologies and tools include the following.

**1) Social factors.** These include the fact that the country has a large number of social benefits, social guarantees, jobs, a high level of medical care, health care, the possibility of obtaining quality education, social security, and the existence of social programs for the integration of migrants. If the leader of the country is able or not able to demonstrate these indicators at a high level, then this is reflected in his rhetoric and in the implementation of actions in this period. If we take a case study as an example migrant crisis in the countries of the European Union, then based on data from OECD Better life Index, Germany scores higher on these dimensions than Hungary <sup>1</sup>. Hence, there is a difference in the statements and activities of political leaders regarding the migration problem, which caused international tension; the difference in approaches to solving existing problems, and all this forms and influences their image. For example, the leader of Germany campaigns to accept migrants, create adaptation and integration programs for migrants, after which he can provide social benefits and jobs, since the country itself is interested in additional labor. Accordingly, against this background, its image looks, on the one hand, positively for migrants and for the European establishment, on the other hand, it is negatively perceived at the national level. The leader of Hungary understands that the country is not able to provide the social guarantees and conditions that the leading EU country can offer, he will better distribute jobs among the population of his country, hence his negative attitude towards accepting migrants and providing them with all kinds of social benefits. Accordingly, its image against this background looks, on the one hand, positively at the national level, on the other hand, it can be negatively perceived at the international level.

**2) Cultural factors.** This includes the historical past of the country, established traditions, customs and values, cultural characteristics, mass consciousness and the educational level of society, which gives rise to the corresponding request and expectations. When working on the image of PR, specialists should understand and take into account that for each country this is the most individual factor, even if these countries are in a coalition, union, etc. If we take our case as an example, then the cultural factors of Germany, as a representative of Western Europe, will be different from the cultural factors of Hungary, as a representative of Eastern Europe. For example, the negative historical past of Germany, namely the unleashing of the Second World War and its consequences, is still something that Germany gets rid of and it succeeds quite successfully. Perhaps that is why their leader is based on pan-European humanistic values, stands for intercultural dialogue, implements a peacekeeping policy and demonstrates the country's openness towards migrants, creating the image of «Mother of Europe». In turn, Hungary, as a pro-Soviet country of the Eastern Bloc in the past, has its own cultural characteristics - rigidity, a certain closeness, a focus on nationalist values. Perhaps that is why the Hungarian leader demonstrated a tough stance, spoke negatively about proposals to accept migrants and, on the whole, “stand” in some kind of opposition, creating the image of a “dictator”, “nationalist”, etc. When focusing on the cultural factor, a political PR specialist can take into account the elements Hofstede's theory, which characterizes the cultural characteristics of society <sup>2</sup>. This can make it clear why a political leader uses such rhetoric and acts in a certain way, analyze the results of these statements, actions and take into account when managing the image of a political leader.

Using this theory for Germany<sup>3</sup> and Hungary<sup>4</sup>, we were able to obtain the following data. For example, an element of the theory «Individualism / Collectivism» - in countries where the first characteristic is more developed, a political leader will be based on the fact that everyone is

<sup>1</sup>OECD Better life index . Access mode: <http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org> (Accessed: 05/05/2019)

<sup>2</sup>Hofstede G. Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations. Thousand Oaks, 2001. P. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Hofstede Insights. What about Germany? Access mode: <https://www.hofstedeinsights.com/country-comparison/germany/> (accessed 05/05/2019).

<sup>4</sup>Hofstede Insights. What about Hungary? Access mode: <https://www.hofstedeinsights.com/country-comparison/hungary/> (accessed 05/05/2019).

individual, you need to focus on yourself and take care only of yourself. In countries where the second characteristic is more developed, the political leader will be based on collective values, on such concepts as “we”, “group”, “together”, etc. If we take into account our case study, then according to the indicators of this theory, the two countries are individualistic. However, Hungary has a much higher percentage than Germany (80% versus 67%). Therefore, we can conclude that the leader of the first country firmly defended his personal interests, limiting the country from certain consequences, and the leader of Germany, despite the high rate of «individualism» in theory, can only sacrifice personal interests, proceed from common European values and to orient the leaders of other countries to act together and jointly within the framework of these rules and concepts, because «we must». Or take an element of theory such as Uncertainty Avoidance, which is the degree to which members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid them. In Hungary, this figure is higher than in Germany (82% versus 65%), respectively, we see this in the actions and rhetoric of the leaders, and this creates a certain image for them: the German leader is more flexible, able to accept «challenges», and the Hungarian leader is more conservative and tries to avoid the undesirable consequences that the unknown can bring. Another element of the theory that we advise you to pay attention to is the “Long-Term Orientation”, which implies two types of societies: normative societies that value this dimension low, prefer to maintain time-tested traditions and norms, viewing changes in society with suspicion. On the other hand, people with a culture that scores high take a more pragmatic approach. In Germany, this figure is much higher than in Hungary (83% versus 58%). The German leader creates an image of a pragmatic politician who is ready to accept the situation, act within its framework, nevertheless strive to find the best solution, explain it and convince others of this. In turn, the Hungarian leader creates an image of a person who does not accept drastic changes, treats them with suspicion and would rather give up what he is not sure about than will “act according to the situation”.

**3) Economic factors.** This includes, for example, the structure of the economy, the rate of inflation, the rate of unemployment and, in general, the level of economic well-being of the people, including the level of income of the population. A political leader whose country shows high performance has a more advantageous image, he is a kind of benchmark, you can be equal to him, but the requirements for him will be appropriate. A political leader whose country performs poorly is limited and forced to work within the framework in which he is. If we take our case study as an example, Germany can be considered one of the most economically developed countries of the Union, therefore, with such opportunities, the leader has the right to dictate his own terms and influence others, which expressed the positive decision of Angela Merkel to accept migrants, because they can afford it, which cannot be said about Hungary<sup>5</sup>.

**4) Political factors.** These include the presence of a certain political regime (totalitarian, authoritarian, democracy), a certain form of government (monarchy or republic and their varieties), the type of government (federation, confederation, unitary state), the presence and development of the institution of civil society, the strength of diplomacy, political situation (stability/instability), political situation in relations with other countries, presence or absence of a multi-party system, presence or absence of strong political opposition. These factors set the “field of work” for political PR specialists. Speaking about the situation in relations between countries, the same Germany and Hungary. One leader does not want to compromise with another on the issue of migrants in order to ease international tensions. For the image of Angela Merkel, this has a negative effect, demonstrating that she does not have sufficient power and the influence that she had before. This has a positive effect on the image of Viktor Orban, showing his leadership qualities, toughness of character and demonstrating the fact that there are new leaders who are ready to disagree with the opinion of the EU leader, defend their interests, create their own “rules of the game” and unite like-minded people around them (Visegrad Four). The last point, for example, can also have a significant impact, since

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<sup>5</sup> The Legatum Prosperity Index 2018. Access mode: [www.prosperity.com](http://www.prosperity.com) (date of access: 05/05/2019).

the presence of a strong opposition, thanks to their statements or actions, can affect the image of a politician and transform it for the worse, for example, the situation in Germany (a sharp rise and support for the opinions of the AfD party). This entails not only an impact on the national image of the politician, but also on the international one, as such events are covered in the media with international broadcasting.

**5) The level of development of communication channels**, for example, the availability and accessibility of media with different information agendas to create pluralism and the opportunity for the public to objectively form an idea of a political leader; access to foreign media; use of social networks. Due to the presence of a high level of development of these communication channels, PR specialists can use the communication aspect of managing the image of a political leader at a high level, use “medialogy”, etc.

**6) The level of independence of the country in economic and political terms**, for the possibility of implementing its activities and making independent decisions. Regarding our case study, we can see a double situation. Within the EU, the existence of a single market and the dependence of most countries on the decisions of Germany creates a certain framework and takes away independence from the same Hungary. Another situation, as the opinions of experts have shown us, is the dependence of EU policy on the US, NATO, and the need to act in the wake of American policy. Therefore, the extent to which the decisions taken by the EU in relation to migrants are independent is a question.

All these factors have a great influence on the image of a political leader in a period of international tension. But in our opinion, one of the most important factors is cultural, since it laid down certain foundations and features over many years, even centuries, based on which a person belonging to a particular culture will perceive information, respond to events and act. just like that, and not otherwise. This is also reflected in the rhetoric/activities of the political leader, as we mentioned earlier. The second most important factor that we highlight is economic. It is really difficult to have some kind of independence, to carry out one's activities, to start and establish partnerships with other countries without a strong economic base. Crisis phenomena and international tensions have a significant impact on this factor, and if it was initially underdeveloped, then later it is impossible to talk about the economic well-being of the population, or about the possibility of accepting the same migrants, because there will simply be nothing to provide them with, or about the possibility of conducting some initiatives to resolve the problem and ease international tension, because they often require economic investments. All this has a negative impact on the image of a political leader, weakening him both within the country and in the international arena, as it drives him into a certain economic framework. And already the economic factor can lead to the presence of social, political factors at high or low levels, the presence or absence of dependence in making independent decisions. Finally, the third most important factor that we highlight is the level of development of communication channels, because it is through them that the political leader implements his communication policy and thanks to them, it becomes clear whether he takes actions to solve existing problems and ease international tension or not. It is necessary to take this factor into account and be able to manage it correctly, making it work for oneself in a plus, and not in a minus, i.e., actively pay attention to the communication component of the model for managing the image of a political leader.

Personal factors play an important role, but we did not include them in the priority list, based on the fact that the image of a political leader is the image that political technologists, political PR specialists and image makers create for him. A real person may not have all the personal factors that we have listed, but his team can create just such an image that will reflect them and work favorably for him in a period of international tension.

Based on the factors we have listed, a political leader and his team can choose the best methods, tools and technologies that will help manage the image of a political leader in a period of international tension. Next, we listed recommendations depending on the level of development of the factors.

There are a number of general recommendations, for example, to respond to the situation and use this moment for your reputation. The worst thing is the political leader's ignorance of what is happening. Inaction can lead to even worse results. Therefore, we recommend responding to “challenges” in any case if they directly concern the country of the political leader or the coalition, the union where the country is located (in our case, for example, the EU countries). This can be expressed in a statement, adoption of a legislative decision, any other activity, but it is necessary to show the public both in your country and in the international arena that you are part of the ongoing processes and are able to influence them.

Use honesty and openness in statements about the existing problem. Even if a mistake was made when making any decision or action, one can imagine a politician as an ordinary living person, with normal human weaknesses. This will be perceived in such a way that the politician can also make mistakes.

Use the skills of crisis behavior, namely the development of a step-by-step plan (strategy) to get out of a crisis situation; discipline and consistency in the implementation of this plan (strategy); concentration of attention on all necessary aspects of the issue; resource mobilization; control over possible information leakage.

With all the existing versatility of the image of a political leader, if necessary, you can use a set of political technologies to change the superstructure component, which mainly relate to such parameters as appearance; gestures, articulations, facial expressions; communication style; behavior in unusual circumstances; responses to crises. Therefore, you can use techniques such as facebuilding and bodybuilding. The first technique is to correct facial expressions and appearance, the second is to build muscle reactions and gestures.

It is not recommended to introduce mythological components into the image or resort to the use of two (several) images at the same time. This may have a negative impact on public perception and demonstrate the inconsistency of the politician's activities. Also, one should not use the manipulation of public consciousness, for example, present the leader in such a way that he is ready to solve problems, but cannot do it at this stage, due to some circumstances. These circumstances may be real or fictional. Such methods also include black PR, fake news, the creation of a conflict situation in which the promoted leader will obviously look advantageous, as a unifying factor, as a person who led the fight against the elements, with some negative manifestations. Sooner or later, information may be published through the media or social networks that will demonstrate the applicability of these methods, and this may negatively affect the image and rating of a political leader. Also, it is not recommended to resort to the use of methods such as labeling, stereotyping, emotional statements or statements without specifics with unconfirmed figures and data.

Based on the factors that we have listed above, we can make recommendations on the choice and selection of methods, technologies and tools for managing the image of a political leader. You can use the following PR tools.

Organize and participate in mass actions, briefings, preparing a certain message and conveying it to the audience. Using these PR tools, it is important to create a favorable psychological climate and skillfully combine diplomatic practices with counter-force ones. Regarding our case, this can be, for example, participation in summits, conferences, international round tables; forums dedicated to the existing problem; exits in the classroom at universities to highlight their position. Speaking about the message that a politician conveys while using these PR tools, he should have a rational and emotional character. The first helps to clearly and reasonably convey your position, why you need to do it this way and not otherwise; rationality implies the voicing of facts, figures, confirmed data, a forecast for the near future, based on several possible scenarios for the development of events and results (including unfavorable ones). Concrete and reasoned proposals are always better than just a beautiful speech. Nevertheless, politics is an art, so you need to add an emotional character to your rhetoric, present information in a “beautiful wrapper”.

Have formal political conversations with other political leaders who were previously not taken as a basis or were not wanted. It can also be meetings with other political leaders in an informal setting (for example, organizing “business breakfasts”).

It is necessary to use all kinds of communication channels and media tools: television, radio, newspapers, the Internet, social media, social networks. Practically through all these communication channels, information is provided not only in the form of text, but also affects the audiovisual side of the content consumer. Here it is necessary to choose the most effective communication channel that will be suitable for the implementation of the activities of a political leader. In our opinion, the most profitable communication channel at the moment is the use of media in the form of media platforms, since they combine the three necessary formats for publications (text, audio, video), links to social networks are attached to them, where all information and thanks to which people can repost and leave comments (tracking this, you can understand what content is of the greatest interest, the public's reaction to the statements and activities of a political leader and, in fact, changes in his ratings and image). The criteria for selecting such media can be as follows: scale, place in the rating (annually, agencies specializing in ratings of national media or media with global broadcasting conduct, analyze and report on them), audience coverage, citation index, format and content of publications.

It is recommended to use a number of other tools.

Interaction and networking (joining coalitions, creating new alliances, groups, organizations to combat the existing problem). Regarding our case, we can cite the following points as an example. For example, the active interaction of Germany with France and the support of the latter in the implementation of the migration policy of Angela Merkel (later, of course, Emmanuel Macron changed his views on the migration issue, nevertheless, there was interaction, and we can count this as a fact). The second point is the strengthening of interaction between the Visegrad Four countries, led by Hungary, and the support of Viktor Orban in pursuing an anti-immigration policy.

The use of “soft power”, namely the use of humanitarian diplomacy, as a kind of political communication, which includes the organization at the international level of state and volunteer activities to improve living conditions in disasters, wars and conflicts, the use and implementation of social, educational, scientific and other programs; influence and management of the information agenda, including the application of a PR action in relation to the information agenda. Regarding our case, volunteering in the process of adaptation of arrived migrants, the creation of special booklets with the necessary information for the first time, an initiative to create and conduct language classes for migrants can be taken.

Implementation of legislative activities. Regarding our case study, this is the closing or opening of borders for migrants, the creation of a law and conditions for their transportation, etc.

Implementation of socio-political initiatives aimed at resolving the problem and easing international tension. Regarding our case, this may be an integration policy: measures to introduce educational programs for migrants, the introduction of additional jobs, the policy of paperwork, legalization, the provision of medical care, housing, training, not only the language, but also training in some work skills.

It is not recommended as a PR tool to resort to organizing and holding mega events within the framework of the existence of international tension. Often, this can entail more costs, controversy, than the acquisition of positive results. First of all, you need to deal with the problem that has arisen.

Thus, we have given a number of recommendations on the use of methods, technologies, tools for managing the image of a political leader in conditions of international tension, based on the most significant, in our opinion, factors.