THE DYNAMICS OF PARTICIPATION OF EXPERIENCE MODULES AND EXPERIENCES IN THE ORGANISATION'S NARRATIVE WITH EMPLOYEES

Anna LIPKA

University of Economics in Katowice; anna.lipka@uekat.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-0849-0935

Purpose: Creating - through an appropriate organisational narrative - positive experiences and experiences for employees is an important instrument for their acquisition and longer retention in the organisation. The aim of the article is, firstly, to verify the degree of uniform presence of the sensory, emotional, intellectual, behavioral and relational module in this narrative, and, secondly, to determine whether the content of these modules changes under the influence of contextual changes.

Design/methodology/approach: As part of the research investigation, the content of 520 pieces of information provided on websites by a purposively selected organisation for 2000 and 2023 was analysed and evaluated (using an attendance analysis, as well as a diversity index and an equal distribution deviation index). Conclusions were related to the degree of satisfaction of various needs of employees.

Findings: It was confirmed that all modules of experience and encounters were present in the organisation's narrative with employees. It also emerged that the content of these modules is influenced not so much by the changing context of the organization's functioning as by general social trends (performatization, cultural narcissism).

Study limitations: The study was limited to one organization. Limitations also relate to the ambiguity that exists in some cases in attributing information to modules of experiences and experiences.

Practical implications: The results can be used in programming the content provided to employees and in improving the conduct of analyses of the extent to which their needs are met.

Originality/value: the proposed way of investigating the extent to which the diverse needs of employees are met is original. Conclusions about the non-dominant impact of the pandemic and post-pandemic context on the content provided to employees may be surprising.

Keywords: experience and encounters modules, narratology, COVID-19 pandemic, market of experiences, context analysis.

Category of the paper: scientific publication.

1. Introduction

In the period of increased mobility of employees on the labor market resulting, among others, from the entry of the so-called liquid generation into this market (Bauman, Leoncini, 2017), the challenge for human capital management is not only to acquire but also to retain valuable employees in the organization (Glattes, 2016). One of the means that can be used for this purpose is effective communication (narrative) with (future) employees. It should provide a credible message creating/sustaining a positive attitude towards the organisation (Kreutzer, 2018, pp. 95-119). The content of this communication should trigger positive experiences and encounters in its addressees, i.e. correspond to the spirit of the Employee Experience. The following research questions were formulated:

- Are all modules of experience and encounters evenly represented in the narrative of the organization with employees, i.e. are the diverse needs of employees met?
- To what extent is the conceptualisation of the content of the above modules influenced by the organisation's mission and the changing context in which it operates?

as well as the corresponding hypotheses:

- All modules of experience and encounters appear in the narrative of the organization with employees, but their representation is uneven.
- The mission of the organization determines the highest share of the related module of experiences and experiences, but this does not apply to periods when contextual conditions determine the hierarchy of the importance of modules in the narrative of the organization with employees.

It is assumed that in the conditions of crystallizing and governed by mechanisms of adapting activities to the employee (customization) and commoditization (commoditization) of the experience market (constituting a stage of market development (Pine II, Gilmore, 1998, p. 98)), the individual needs of customers, including those operating on the labor market, i.e. (potential) employees, are important, which, moreover, constitutes the coherence of different types of markets. They are participants in the experience economy - the advanced post-industrial economy. Creating a diverse and focused verbal message to future and current employees may not be easy in the conditions of anti-linguistic culture (Lasch, 2019, p. 172) and homo videns (Sartori, 2005), bringing to the fore visual message, iconic and not expressed in sounds or letters.

Section 2 presents the state of the art of the Encounters and Experiences modules. The methodology of our own research based on the literature study is presented in section 3, while the results of the empirical research and an attempt to interpret them, followed by the conclusions, are presented in sections 4 and 5.

2. Literature review - types of experience modules and encounters

The sensory module includes separately or in combination (in order to achieve multisensoriality (Cachero-Martinez, Vazquez-Casielles, 2017, pp. 473-486)) visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, gustatory stimulation applied to employees in order to elicit specific positive sensations. It is therefore closely related to aesthetics (Schmitt, Simonson, 2019) and aesthetic economics (Reckwitz, 2017) and aesthetic leadership (Hansen, Rapo, Sauer, 2007, pp. 544-560). Includes, among others:

- appropriate use of colours (e.g. the cheery mood-creating colour yellow (Darnikowska, 2004)),
- the use of visualisation techniques, e.g. circept (Cempel, 2005, p. 94) to motivate creativity,
- avoiding 'sensitising words' (e.g. 'golden handcuffs' in relation to pro-loyalty programmes),
- the use of aesthetically pleasing, linguistically polite and morally correct (including - adapted to the expectations of different generations of employees) vocabulary in communication, e.g. avoiding polysemy (Burska et al., 2016, p. 41),
- the avoidance of creative expressions, in the form of, for example, slang or periphrases or syntactic parallelisms,
- reducing nuisance odours that are not good for health (Schiffman, Williams, 2005, pp. 129-132) and taste and odour stimuli that make it difficult to concentrate on work,
- shaping aesthetically pleasing work spaces, positively influencing vigour (the work engagement component) and behaviour (Hall, Hall, 2001, pp. 14-15, 43) and the health and sensory experience (including the sense of touch) of employees (Pachura, 2016, p. 409),
- use of the audiosphere function (Mizera-Pęczek, 2023, pp. 59-69).

The ethical use of the so-called emotional engineering as part of the emotional module, which contradicts the use of psychomanipulation, is aimed at regulating (initiating, sustaining, modulating) the states experienced at work. They are the result of social interaction, but also of a match or mismatch between the ability profile of employees and the requirements of the work tasks or projects undertaken. In the case of matching, employees may experience flow, and in the absence of flow – anxiety, boredom or apathy (Csikzentmihalyi, 2008). This module includes the shaping of an appropriate work climate (e.g. by making appropriate use of the phenomenon of affective contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, Rapson, 1994) and consciously influencing the psychological capital of employees (Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, pp. 5-14).

The intellectual module is related to challenging employees at work in the form of increased mental effort and creative, divergent thinking, and in the case of performing work perceived as monotonous – making reflections in the field of job crafting (tasks, relationships or ways of thinking about work). Its content also includes the formation of the cognitive components of attitudes required for work.

The behavioral module is associated with triggering and maintaining the desired (adequate to the organization's mission and culture) employee behavior (Zang, Parker, 2019, pp. 126-146) in the form of, for example, appropriate work efficiency, retention in the organization, positive attitude to changes or not resigning from civic behavior at work. The formation of this module requires the use of performative verbs (e.g. Apply!, Join us! within the Candidate Experience, an element of the Employee Experience relating to recruitment processes).

The relational module is concerned with the formation of relationships with people with whom social capital is formed (Pocker, Ballantyne, 2016, pp. 128-143). It ensures the smooth running of mutual learning processes within the organisation (Cascio, Montealegre, 2016, pp. 349-375), the formation of trust, the strengthening of bonds, the satisfaction of affiliative needs and helping each other at work, which is particularly important in a multicultural and multigenerational work environment.

3. Research methodology

The aim of the article is, firstly, to verify the degree of uniform presence of the sensory, emotional, intellectual, behavioral and relational module in this narrative, and, secondly, to determine whether the content of these modules changes under the influence of contextual changes. As part of the research investigation, the content of 520 pieces of information.

In order to verify the formulated two research hypotheses, an analysis of the narrative/analysis of the content (content) of current events (units of analysis) placed on the website of a deliberately selected organization – a public university educating economists (its name was annotated, but – in order to objectify – it was not decided to choose its own home university) was used. The choice was also determined by the easy accessibility of the content of the (also archived) broadcasts to those not connected with the university under study and the transparency of the presentation, which facilitates analysis. The object of the study is thus the number/percentage of information whose nature allows it to be attributed to a specific (cf. section 2) module of experiences and encounters. Using secondary materials, the study is therefore qualitative-quantitative in nature, i.e. it requires a labour-intensive analysis of the text in order to properly identify the module. When conducting it, it is important to be aware that: "Content analysis is never better than the categorisation key used in it" (Pisarek, 2019, p. 41).

Therefore, the issues of assigning specific content to a particular module are described in detail below.

It was thus assumed that as belonging to the sensory module there would be (dated as news/updated events) information referring to the senses, i.e. concerning e.g.: evaluations of the appearance of newly created websites, attached Christmas cards, image-marketing campaigns, films (e.g. about the university in the online era), singing presentations (e.g. performances by the university choir), new interior design of university buildings, including installed sensors; catering facilities for students on campus.

As far as the emotional module is concerned, information regarding, for example:

- pride in the successes (scientific, teaching, sporting, environmental) of students and staff,
- expressions of gratitude,
- expressed fears,
- providing hope, psychological support.

In turn, the intellectual module was assigned information about scientific events (environmental lectures, programs, projects, webinars, foreign language learning, scientific circles, opportunities to obtain certificates, interviews on scientific topics, comments, etc., of Nobel laureates, consultations, coaching sessions, study visits, book presentations).

News about content containing the imperative of action, such as: announcements of the Conference of Rectors of Economic Universities, Rector's orders, information and didactic surveys, submission of diploma theses, application for doctoral studies, conducting remote classes, placement tests, student service rules, recruitment, recruitment for grants, conducting elections, access to the library, invitation to participate in competitions, application for scholarships, implementation of control activities, were assumed to belong to the behavioral module.

In addition, it was assumed that the relational model will include the content of information on the functioning of the academic community, such as: open days of universities, television interviews, adaptation days, celebrations of important celebrations, hosting outstanding figures, hundredth birthdays of retired employees, employee farewells, unveiling of employee commemorative boards, promotion of graduates, speeches, letters to the academic community, integration events, activities for the local community, presentation of employee profiles.

In order to find an answer to the first research question, the following were used:

- a frequency analysis (incidence) of each of the five modules in relation to the total number of units of analysis for the selected period,
- the degree of diversity (diversity index) showing the presence/absence of information from each of the five modules, making use of the literature on its determination (Abramowska-Kmon, Muszyńska, 2012, pp. 11-32),

- an index of deviation from equal distribution, indicating how many percentage points (with a negative/positive value) a given module is represented in minus or in plus than would result from the equal frequency of the information in the organisation's narrative with employees in the case of equal representation through this information of the individual modules.

In order to capture the change in context, it was decided to conduct a news analysis for 2020 (the year of the pandemic) and 2023 (the postpandemic year).

According to the content of the hypotheses, all modules are expected to occur, but in varying intensity and a higher share (related to the mission of the university) of the intellectual module in the post-pandemic period than in the pandemic period, when other needs of university stakeholders may come to the fore. Determining possible changes in the proportion of modules will require benchmarking, i.e. analysing the content of the modules on a dynamic basis.

4. Test results and their interpretation

The results of the frequency analysis obtained for both years are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Numbers of information units identified for the surveyed university as individual experience modules for 2020 and 2023

Period under review	Sensory module	Emotional module	Intellectual module	Behavioral module	Relation module	Total
2020	9	42	66	75	38	230
2023	6	50	66	85	83	290

Source: Own study.

According to the first formulated hypothesis, for both periods all modules are represented (diversity index equal to 100%), but with different frequencies. For 2020, only 3.9 per cent of the information units belong to the sensory module (it should be added that visual stimuli in the form of, for example, an aesthetically pleasing layout of the text or highlighting its individual words are present in almost every information unit, but they are very rarely the focus of the content). This percentage is 18.3% for the emotional module, while for the intellectual, behavioural and relational modules it is equal to: 28.7%, 32.6% and 16.5%. This implies the following deviations from equal distribution:

- minus 16.1 p.p. (sensory module),
- minus 1.7 p.p. (emotional module),
- plus 8.7 p.p. (intellectual module),
- plus 12.6 p.p. (behavioural module),
- minus 3.5 p.p. (relation module).

In the module with the lowest share in 2020 and the largest negative deviation from equal distribution, i.e. in the sensory module, almost all stimuli (except for one – information about sensors on the university building) relate to visual and/or auditory stimulation. Their content is:

- new website,
- Christmas song,
- image campaign,
- European Literature Night,
- performance by an academic choir,
- Christmas card,
- a film about the functioning of the university during the COVID-19 era.

As for the content of the emotional module for 2020, their small spectrum of use draws attention. Joy, pride, admiration (e.g. in connection with a degree award or the assumption of a prestigious position by a university employee or student success) dominate. In individual cases, there is gratitude or the expression of concern (against the background of the impact of social disputes and their legal, political and social consequences in Poland on safety and health during the pandemic), the giving of psychological support, hope and thus - concern, but also the expectation "that things will get better" (Lazarus, 1991, p. 122, after Franken, 2013, p. 314). While there are no signs of negative emotions, i.e. messages expressing surprise at the situation or surrender (a mix of fear and liking (Plutchik, 1980)) or disappointment (a mix of surprise and sadness (Plutchik, 1980)), there are also no signs of emotions expressing a positive attitude (liking) towards the coping methods used, i.e. functioning efficiently despite the context.

In connection with this context, performatives (Wybraniec, 2016, p. 85) associated with the behavioral module gained the advantage of messages in general, which is understandable in situations of the impact of the presented behaviors on the health and safety of the community. The primacy of the behavioural module (for which there is the greatest positive bias) over the intellectual during the pandemic is not surprising in this situation. "Pandemic" in its nature is also to some extent (8 out of 38 messages) the information belonging to the coverage module (such as the publication of the letter on civic solidarity during COVID-19).

Also in 2023, the least (with a reservation such as for 2020) information units (2.1% of their total number) qualify for the sensory module. They concern:

- Climate Days,
- photo report from the innovation design marathon,
- video reports from the musical theatre,
- photo report of the rectors' debate,
- photo report from the gala at the end of the university's jubilee celebrations,
- photo report of the inauguration of the business individual study programme.

Due to the above participation of the module, its deviation from equal distribution is the highest, amounting to in minus 17.9 pp.

The highest share, as in 2020, is not the intellectual module (share – 22.8%; deviation from the equal distribution in plus – 2.8 pp), but the behavioral one (share – 29.3%; deviation from the equal distribution in plus – 9.3 pp). So it was not just pandemic contextual conditions that determined the latter's stature. The share of the emotional module in 2023 is similar to that in 2020. (17.2 %; deviation from equal distribution - 2.8 p.p.). At the expense of the intellectual module, above all the share of the relational module increased (to 28.6 %). The deviation rate from equal distribution for it in 2023 is plus 8.6 p.p.

5. Discussion and conclusions

The first hypothesis was positively verified. This verification demonstrates that various employee needs are being met through information. However, significant (reaching up to 17.9 p.p. in minus and 12.6 p.p. in plus) deviations are indicative of the uneven degree to which these needs are being met. The low participation of the sensory module may indicate that even in times of homo videns, the university sees its role in not joining the pervasive (Lasch, 2019) anti-language culture. Nevertheless, it seems expedient to reflect on the optimal shaping of the sensory module's contribution to the organisation's narrative with its stakeholders.

In the pandemic and post-pandemic period, the participation of the emotional module did not differ significantly, which may be surprising, because the first period required greater sharing of emotions. This is probably due to the dominance of communicating the joy of successes rather than information having a calming effect on the community. Perhaps the reason for this lies in the belief that universities - because of their mission - should not go down the path of expressive organisations.

The share of the intellectual module expressing the university's mission (28.7% and 22.8%) for both years has a deviation in plus, but the above data do not allow to positively verify the second hypothesis. Quite simply, the share decreased, not increased, in the postcovid period, which contradicts the above hypothesis. The reasons for this can be seen in the performatisation that permeates all organisations (Carlson, 2007), resulting in a relatively high proportion of the behavioural module among the modules of experience and lived experience. At the same time, the times of remoteness have led to an increased interest in direct (rather than just virtual) social relationships, with the implication that the in minus deviation of this module value in 2020 will change to an in plus deviation three years later. In conclusion, contrary to the hypothesis formulated, it is not contextual conditions that seem to determine the prioritisation of modules in the organisation's narrative with employees, but rather certain general social trends, such as those described in the literature by Ch. Lasch or M. Carlson.

Undoubtedly, one should follow the dynamics of the participation of experience modules and experiences of the narrative of the organization with employees. In order to reduce the workload and increase the objectivity of the analyses in this area, consideration should be given to the development of appropriate software, which would also make it possible to make the necessary corrections on an ongoing basis.

References

1. Abramowska-Kmon, A., Muszyńska, M. (2012). Methodology for calculating the diversity index. In: E. Lisowska (Eds.), *Diversity policy in central administration* (pp. 11-32). Warsow: Oficyna Wydawnicza Szkoły Głównej Handlowej, http://rownetraktowanie-gov.pl/, 9.05.2021.
2. Bauman, Z., Leoncini, T. (2017). *Nati liquidi.* Mailand: Sperling and Kupfer Editori.
3. Burska, K., Cieśla, B., Jachimowska, K., Kudra, B. (2016), *Linguistic creativity in advertising. A manual not only for specialists.* Łódź: University of Łódź Publishing House.
4. Caechero-Martinez, S., Vazquez-Casielles, R. (2017). Simulating Curiosity and Consumer Experience in a   Retailer. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management*, *Vol. 7, Iss. 4,* pp. 473-486.
5. Carlson, M. (2007). *Performance*. Warsaw: PWN.
6. Cascio, W.F., Montealegre, R. (2016). How Technology Is Changing Work and Organization. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *Vol. 3,* pp. 349-375.
7. Cempel, C. (2005). *Modern issues in research methodology and philosophy - selected topics for doctoral and postgraduate students*. Faculty of Automobiles and Agricultural Machines of the Warsaw University of Technology; Radom: Institute of Exploitation Technology.
8. Csikzentmihalyi, M. (2008). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience.* New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
9. Darnikowska, D. (2004). The influence of environmental stimuli on consumer behaviour. *Marketing and Market, Iss. 7*, pp. 17-21.
10. Franken, R.E. (2013). *The psychology of motivation.* Sopot: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
11. Glattes K. (2016). *Der Konkurrenz ein Kundenerlebnis voraus. Customer Experience Management – 111 Tips zu Touchpoints, die Kunden begeistern.* Wiesbaden: Springer, Gabler.
12. Hall, M.R., Hall, E.T. (2001). *The fourth dimension in architecture. A study on the impact of a building on human behaviour.* Warsaw: Muza.
13. Hansen, H., Rapo, A., Sauer, E. (2007). Aesthetic leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *Vol. 18(6),* pp. 544-560.

14. Hatfield, E., Cacioppo, J.T., Rapson, I.R. (1994). *Emotional Contagion.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

15. Kreutzer, R.T. (2018). Customer Experience Management – wie man Kunden begeistern kann. In: A. Rusnjak, D. Schallmo (Eds.), *Customer Experience im Zeitalter des Kunden.* Wiesbaden: Springer, Gabler.

16. Lasch, Ch. (2019). *The culture of narcissism. American life in a time of declining expectations.* Warsaw: Sedno Academic Publishing House.

17. Lazarus, R.S. (1991). *Emotion and adaptation.* New York: Oxford University Press.

18. Mizera-Pęczek, P. (2023). Koncepcja kształtowania audiosfery miejsca pracy. Między sztuką a zarządzaniem. *Edukacja Ekonomistów i Menedżerów, 67(1),* pp. 59-69.

19. Pachura, P. (2016). *On space in management. A methodological study.* Warsaw: PWN.

20. Packer, J., Ballantyne, R. (2016). Conceptualizing the Visitor Experience: A Review of Literature and Development of a Multifaceted Model. *Visitor Studies*, *Vol. 19(2),* pp. 128-143.

21. Pine, B.J., Gilmore, J.H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*, *Vol. 76(4),* pp. 173-177.

22. Pisarek, W. (2019). Content analysis of messages. Research procedure. In: W. Kita, I. Loewe (Eds.), *Language in the press. Anthology* (pp. 13-53). Katowice: University of Silesia Publishing House.

23. Plutchik, R. (1980). *Emotion: A Psychoevolutionary Synthesis.* New York: Harper and Row.

24. Reckwitz, A. (2017). *Exploring creativity. On the process of social aestheticisation.* Warsaw: National Science Centre.

25. Sartori, G. (2005). *Homo videns. Telewizja i pomyślenie*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

26. Schiffman, S.S., Williams, C.M. (2005). Science of odour as a potential health issue. *Journal of Environmental Quality*, *Vol. 34(1),* pp. 129-138.

27. Schmitt, B.H., Simonson, A. (2019). Marketing-Aesthetik fuer Marken. In: F.-R. Esch (Eds.), *Handbuch Markenfuehrung* (pp. 773-793). Springer, Gabler.

28. Seligman, M.E.P., Csikzentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive Psychology: An Introduction. *American Psychologist*, *Vol. 55*, pp. 5-14.

29. Wybraniec, M. (2016). Performative verbs versus constative statements in ballet librettos. In: L. Kuras, G. Majkowski, A. Fadecka (Eds.), *Ideas, values, words in public life and advertising.* Łódź: Published by the Academy of Humanities and Economics in Łódź.

30. Zang, F., Parker, S.K. (2019). Reorienting job crafting research: A hierarchical structure of job crafting concepts and integrative review. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour, Vol. 40(2),* pp. 126-146.

31. Zimbardo, P.G., Johnson, R.L., McCann, V. (2016). *Schluesselkonzepte der Psychologie.* Halbergmoos: Pearson.