

VERIFYING AN IMAGE OBJECTIVES MATRIX FOR MEASURING THE EFFECTS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES IN BUSINESS

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INTRODUCTION

Research on company image can be done based on a number of initial assumptions. It is therefore possible to carry out research aimed at an initial state analysis to identify an organization's existing image, but also to assess implemented campaigns or strategies to determine the extent of changes that have occurred in an organization's image. In economic practice there are a number of methods for measuring the effects of public relations activities, including a systematic environmental analysis in the form of participant observation, non-participant observation, media monitoring, extensive crisis simulations to prepare for difficult situations, anti-crisis plan preparation support, and more. In practice, a whole spectrum of social research methods is applied [Miotk 2010]. They are used in a variety of ways, and are analysed in detail based on a number of variables. There is little doubt that there is a need to build more new methods, as that need results directly from the development of public relations tools, their availability and use. Despite different approaches to measurement, and paying attention to the needs of individual entities, there remains one more important aspect – many managers' lack of a professional approach to image management. Thus, activities are undertaken without a plan or budget, and are often realized ad hoc without thinking. The same holds true for the question of assessment, which is not always considered an instrument to support the management process. And after all, assessment can become an element that goes beyond strategic and operational activities.

One approach that can be used in complex image management is an image objectives matrix. The matrix, which becomes part of the long-term measurement of which W.K. Lindenmann writes, can be used both to forecast changes that occur in the image area, with a particular focus on capturing symptoms of crisis situations, and also in cur-

rent activities and in assessments of effects and changes that occur in an examined entity. It can also function as an element of crisis support [Miotk 2010]. Especially in this latter issue, the image objectives matrix method may be particularly useful thanks to its capacity, detailed nature, and its ability to flexibly adapt to changing market conditions. It helps identify symptoms that may affect crisis situations. On the basis of research done on an image objectives matrix, it is possible to determine the starting point for further assessment or subsequent research and analyses, as well as to identify changes that were made in the range of internal and external image over a given period.

In addition to the image objectives matrix method discussed above, the subject literature provides a window on a number of other methods for measuring the effectiveness of public relations activities. These include models by M. Cutlip, J. McNamara, T. Watson, K. Huyse, A. Zerfass, L.W. Nolte and J. White. However, no further mention of these models will be made in this article, because they are mainly theoretical in nature. We focus instead on assessing the practical use of the public relations effect measurement method. This is also the main advantage of the image objectives matrix over the selected models, but they are a good starting point for many theoretical, as well as practical, analyses.

PLANNING AND RESEARCH IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations activities should always start with research, which is defined as a set of methods aimed at obtaining information from the market and from within the organization. They help to minimize the risk involved in making decisions. From the point of view of the image, research aims to determine the point at which an entity is in an environment in which it can be seen by the environment.

There are a number of divisions that make it possible to systematize concepts involved in research. One is to divide them into primary and secondary. Primary concepts include those that give information programmed according to a researcher's needs. This makes them precise and detailed. Secondary research is characterized by the use of both internal and external information that already exists and has been previously worked out. Secondary research data can be collected quickly and inexpensively [Tworzydło and Ołędzki 2009].

When a company prepares research projects, it is essential that it define where it wants to be after implementing the assumptions made as the researcher's field of interest. The research objectives concerning a company's internal and external image include:

- to assess how employees and other target groups perceive the company and identify changes to be made in this area;
- to assess the relations prevailing in the company between employees and divisions, and to suggest changes in this area;
- to assess tools used in internal and external communication;
- to assess motivational activities carried out in the company, as well as other ones aimed at building teams;
- to identify the symptoms of crisis situations;
- to analyse the effectiveness of communication channels;
- to assess changes that occur within and outside the company's walls.

An image objectives matrix referred to in this article makes it possible to search for knowledge on topics of interest to a company. That knowledge enables the company to fill the gap between what it knows and the information it lacks, i.e. the present state and the one it desires. However, companies embark upon such searches only sporadically, mainly due to their costs. Implementing company-designed research projects requires knowledge and analytical skills, and often the full-time employment of sociologists. External costs often exceed companies' resources for such activities. If access to quantitative research is not available, quality-based analyses using web resources, media monitoring data, or in-house data are used in business practice. The analysis is conducted in multiple

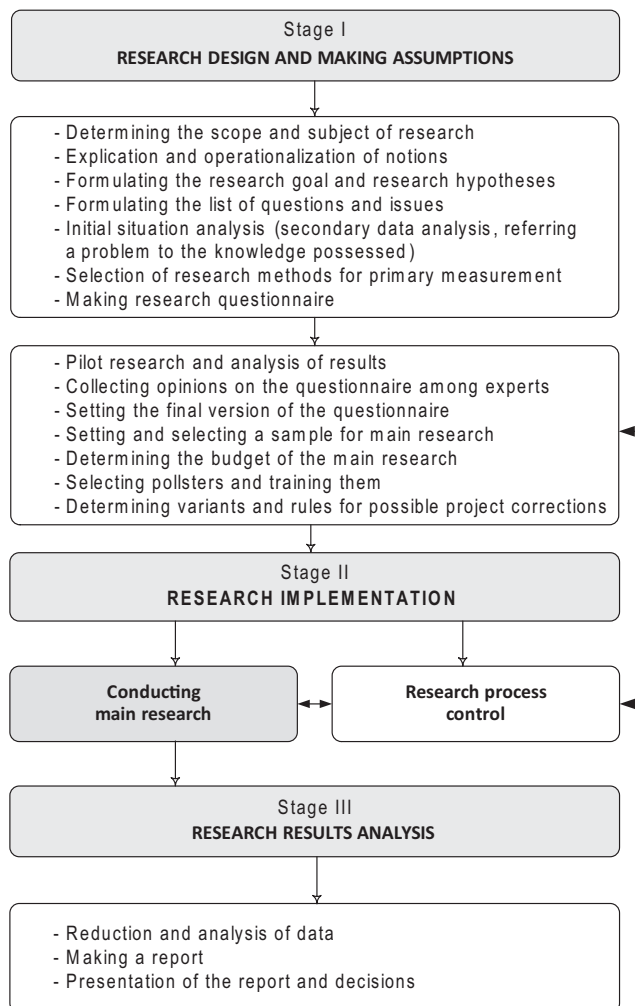


FIG. 1. Diagram of research used in the matrix design process

Source: Tworzydło 2008.

ways, using, for example, resources collected in the company or which are available on the Internet. In addition, research is conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods that can be both effective and efficient. According to W.K. Lindenmann, measuring the effectiveness of public relations activities means considering “any and all studies prepared to determine the relative value of what will be carried out under public relations”. Efficiency means striving to achieve goals without concentrating on maximizing the cost of doing so. Effectiveness is defined as the ability to achieve goals, while reducing the cost of doing so. Therefore, this is a relationship of efficient actions, i.e. those that have been completed by achieving a goal, in relation to the effort required to achieve it.

A communication audit enables the accumulation of a wide range of data and subsequent formulation of goals that are the starting point for communication activities. Goals may include building or changing the company’s image, as well as providing support for other activities, such as advertising. These goals are the basis for generating ideas that are then targeted at selected groups using a specific set of tools. Based on the information collected, it is possible to build a strategy understood as a public relations action plan, which describes the scope of the tasks to result in implementation of the primary objective and specific objectives. But in order for this strategy to be efficacious, its goals must be realistic and set at a certain time, and the strategy itself and its actions must accord with budget assumptions. Objectives should also be characterized by measurability, explicitness, detail and orientation to effects. All assumptions made in the strategic document are subject to control and monitoring. A systematic assessment can also lead to making adjustments in the range of individual parts, as well as the level of objective achievement.

The research process that is carried out in order to achieve effects in the form of a reliable measurement of public relations activities should consist of a logically arranged, coherent set of stages. The first stage is focused on research design and assumption making, while the second implements the research and the third analyses the results. These stages are illustrated in Figure 1 (though please notes that the described research process concerns the implementation of projects that are consistent with the concept of image assessment based on the image objectives matrix method).

To a large extent, the success of the research process depends on researchers’ approach to data that can be acquired throughout the research process, taking into account the logical consistency of the collected empirical material. This approach determines the scope of information used, and then influences the choice of methodology as part of the research.

PRACTICAL USE OF THE IMAGE OBJECTIVES MATRIX

The image objectives matrix method appears to be a complex element, crowning the research process, but it may constitute a specific aggregator of content delivered through research. It allows the starting point for image activities to be defined precisely. Matrix-based research makes it possible to identify the place in which a company is located in terms of both its internal and external images. It also allows research projects to be systematized. Thanks to its universality, it favours the unification of research processes, eliminates mistakes in the research process, educates in the field of professional image research, and enables inter-period comparisons [Tworzydło and Olędzki 2009].

The matrix is a support method for crisis staffs, because it allows for the identification of symptoms that may arise and areas that may pose a threat, which can then translate into support to solve crisis situations. It can also help to determine the direction of changes a company should make so that its final acceptance is stable and completed at the level it expects.

In ZETO's case, image research is based on the use of an analytical tool called an image objectives matrix. The location and primary objectives of ZETO-Rzeszów's were identified using it. The analysis used data collected during internal research on the staff (N = 75) and external research carried out among institutional clients (N = 200). The total accumulated empirical material was adapted to the matrix design requirements (five-point quantitative scales with values from 0 up to 4). The report included a comprehensive set of indicators that contributed to the company's image, and a trend analysis based on data from research (2006–2016) previously conducted. The image gap, which informs the company and researchers about the difference between the desired state and the state obtained in the image research, was calculated. A graphical representation of the difference between the desired state and the obtained state, the gap informs us about the space that separates the organization from the ideal state within the perception of the organization [Sztucki 1998]. It is the smaller one, while the actions undertaken by the company are more complex, professional, consistent with identity, and more. After exceeding the limit of the image's influence force, the external image can be supported with the internal image. The image gap provides information about problems the organization has in communicating. The bigger it is, the more concerns there will be about its future and its further perception in both its internal and external environments. There is a square in a matrix that represents the ideal image. This is the point the organization should strive to reach each time.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of the quantitative research carried out in 2016 was to analyse the internal and external images of ZETO-Rzeszów, and to translate the results into the fields of the image objectives matrices along with an interpretation of individual indicators. The research was a continuation of cyclically conducted measurements within the assessment of ZETO-Rzeszów by its institutional clients and staff.

Compared to earlier editions of research conducted for the company, here a broad range of research problems was broadened further, on the basis of an analysis of the needs of staff and institutional clients. The organizational climate issues that employees had reported in previous research projects were also taken into account. Additionally, the consultation between ZETO's management team and the management board made it possible to develop a new and more complex form of tools (two questionnaires) that met the company's needs and set strategic goals. The image indicators battery thus developed became the starting point for the current and future editions of the project, which will greatly facilitate comparative analyses.

Figure 2 presents a diagram of the entire research process. It takes into account the use of the image objectives matrix to measure public relations effects.

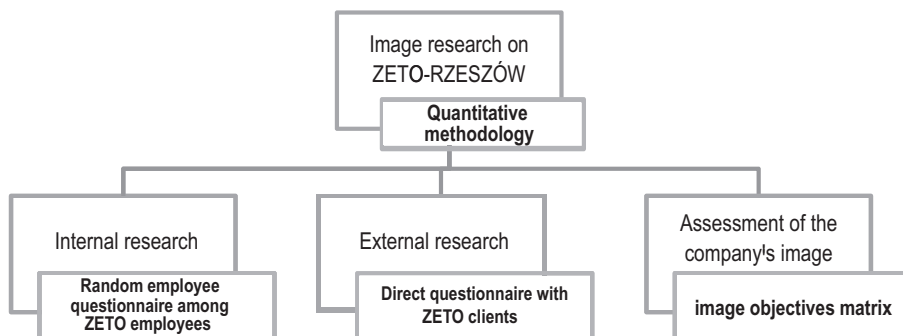


FIG. 2. Research methods and techniques used

Source: the authors' own elaboration on the basis of image research done on ZETO-Rzeszów.

The results were analysed using a method to assess public relations effects in an organization. The method shows where the organization is located, and helps it to carry out image transformations with an emphasis on preventing crisis situations and their effects. A matrix is based on the results of quantitative research among internal and external target groups with the assumption of uniform research trials and the universal nature of the questionnaire during time intervals under analysis. “The selection of respondents in particular groups must be made based on the principle of statistical measurement, assuming the smallest error possible”.

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL IMAGES FROM ZETO-RZESZÓW IN 2016 – ANALYSIS RESULTS

Later in this article, there is a classification of the factors that make up ZETO-Rzeszów's image along with average values, an analysis of the company's image based on the results of the 2016 edition, a separation of the image area for the years 2006–2016, the direction of the image changes, an analysis of leading trends, and a description of how the image gap was calculated and interpreted, showing the space that divides the organization from achieving image perfection. Because image studies conducted in 2016 were based on new, more detailed survey questionnaires, there were also changes in battery indicators that co-create the image objectives matrix. The model used to aggregate variables of the internal and external images of the entity studied was improved with key elements from the perspective of the company's management board. This made it possible to conduct more precise analyses, which may be the starting point for the implementation of strategic solutions based on a recommendation model, e.g. in the field of internal communication.

The current structure of the survey reflects ZETO's operational strategy more accurately, and takes into account the information obtained in previous research projects. The battery of indicators designed for the research will henceforth be the starting point for analyses in subsequent editions of research. When the research was begun, it was assumed that the analysis would include two key target groups – ZETO employees and

business clients. The selection of the unit of analysis was periodically maintained over successive editions of the study, which is an extremely important component of the entire research protocol. Also, the method of calculating matrix points and the image gap remains unchanged, though the number of specific indicators changed due to the modification of tools, which are currently characterized by a high level of standardization. Such a change makes it possible to apply analogous research procedures in subsequent years. It is also possible to make a comparative analysis of results obtained in previous editions. This year's research relates to more in-depth image aspects, which allows for a more effective implementation of the decision-making processes and solutions making up ZETO-Rzeszów's development direction.

In the course of the analyses, lists containing operationalized indicators aimed at developing the image objectives matrix for ZETO-Rzeszów were made. As regards how the values are interpreted, it is assumed that the higher the score (from 0 up to 4), the better the perception of a given component of the image is, both in terms of external clients and internal staff. In the first case – external studies – 38 external quantitative indicators were identified; they are summarized in Table 1. The company's image consists not only of soft, obvious and consequential aspects, e.g. from communication processes, but also the hard assessment of a product offer or technological processes, which by becoming the subject of assessment of the environment are sub-images/components of the company's overall image, and are therefore among the factors to be assessed and listed.

How the organization planned to shape its image can be divided into two basic factor groups: its state (declared values, standards of conduct, identity, strategies, degree of declaration fulfilment, product offer, and other), and the intensity and quality of communication carried out not only by PR but other communication sub-systems in both internal and external areas. Therefore, in the research cited in this article, a wide range of factors affecting image is taken into account.

In the internal research, indicators based on the assessment of individual aspects were used by ZETO-Rzeszów's employees. The survey questionnaire contained 58 single statements tested on a five-degree order scale, where 1 is the lowest negative grade, and 5 is the highest extreme positive grade. It was then necessary to adjust the measurement to design requirements of the image objectives matrix. For this purpose, the answers were placed on a 0-to-4 scale for each variable used. This maintained the scale's sensitivity while adjusting the values to the needs of the tool design. A large number of statements implicated the need to categorize the values into broader thematic indexes. Finally, 13 indexes aggregating individual internal quantitative indicators were designed. The components of the indexes were analysed in a detailed internal research report. The results are summarized in Table 2.

The results can be interpreted individually for each statement by means of the calculated average, and also in the synthetic view as the value of the whole index. We used the second approach, which falls into the area of calculation of the image objectives matrix. The index measurement scheme of the internal image is therefore based on the integrity analysis procedure and the creation of new quantitative variables in the SPSS empirical data analysis software by entering an appropriate numerical expression. The consistency of the position is checked well in advance using a dedicated test, and the result of Alfa

TABLE 1. External image factors used to assess ZETO-Rzeszów (on a 0–4 scale)

Research area	Indicator	Average
Direct parameters of company's image	confidence level in the company	3.43
	company assessment by friends and family of institutional clients	2.95
	perception of ZETO employees as professionals	3.43
	overall quality assessment of products and services	3.32
	market position assessment	3.05
	level of knowledge possessed on the company under study	2.65
	availability of service and product information	3.11
	presence in the media	1.61
	honesty of activities	3.58
Assessment of service quality	materiality level of services	2.97
	solidity level of services	3.32
	empathy level of services	3.31
	reliability level of services	3.56
	responsiveness level of services	3.39
Specialist software	range of assortment	3.23
	degree of adaptability to customer needs	3.42
	level of software modernity	3.33
	software quality	3.40
	failure-free operation of software	3.13
	support for the implementation process	3.11
	assessment of duration of the implementation process	3.04
Service	assessment of software service	3.06
	assessment of hardware service (average for 6 categories)	3.51
	service personnel's service level	3.40
	range of service assortment	3.08
	degree of adaptability to customer needs	3.40
	modernity level of services	3.38
	quality of service	3.40
	failure-free operation of service	3.36
ZETO's employees	competence, professionalism	3.55
	personal commitment, customer care	3.55
	personal politeness	3.81
	provision of full and comprehensive information	3.57
	access to information while processing a case	3.45
	customer satisfaction level with ZETO's employees service	3.59
Financial conditions	assessment of price lists (average for 3 tested features)	3.42
	satisfaction with price negotiations	3.03
	assessment of prices offered by ZETO	1.84
Average for the vertical axis of the matrix (external image)		3.23

Source: the authors' own elaboration on the basis of image research on ZETO-Rzeszów.

TABLE 2. The internal image factors for ZETO-Rzeszów (range of measurement from 0 to 4)

Research area	Index	Value
Internal image	Level of identification with company values (9 indicators)	3.61
	Level of employee identification with ZETO (8 indicators)	2.78
	CSR in the company (3 indicators)	3.12
	Quality of the management model (5 indicators)	2.16
	Quality of internal communication processes (5 indicators)	2.96
	Assessment of the board's communication competence (5 indicators)	2.93
	Assessment of vertical communication: employee–manager (3 indicators)	3.45
	Assessment of horizontal communication: employee–manager (4 indicators)	3.17
	Opportunities for professional development in the company (3 indicators)	2.20
	Assessment of the working environment (4 indicators)	3.13
	Employee support level (3 indicators)	3.20
	Effectiveness of the employee evaluation system (3 indicators)	2.16
	Assessment of the motivating system (3 indicators)	1.86
Average for the horizontal axis of the matrix (internal image)		2.83

Source: the authors' own elaboration on the basis of image research on ZETO-Rzeszów.

Cronbach's coefficient¹ determines the possibility of combining several variables into one valid index. At the index design phase, it is necessary to maintain a high level of research awareness, especially in the sphere of question selection, since they must have comparable response lists that differ in their level of order measurement and have the same direction at least. It must also be ensured that the questions relate to the same thematic subject. The index is calculated on a scale to which values from 0 up to 4 are assigned, with the lowest values being negative and the highest positive. The value obtained can also be expressed as a percentage using standard ratios and interpretive intervals, which will better illustrate the results obtained, though remain at the interval value level required for matrix design. The entire calculation procedure is repeated until 13 individual values are obtained, and on the basis of which the arithmetic average is calculated. This will be the target position on the horizontal axis of the matrix representing the position occupied by the subject under analysis with respect to its internal image.

Based on the data contained in the above two tables, the global average values were calculated. These values are the points of two axes of the image objectives matrix, i.e. the horizontal axis: internal image dimension, with an average of 2.8 (13 indexes), and the vertical axis, with an average of 3.2 (38 indicators). This made it possible to locate ZETO-Rzeszów in one of the 16 squares of the matrix, and to make an appropriate analysis of the position to which it was assigned.

¹ The analysis was done using a statistics program. It was designed to indicate whether individual elements that make up the scale check the same phenomenon, and takes values from 0 to 1. Obtaining a score within the range of 0.7 means that the scale is reliable (its positions are consistent and investigate the same phenomenon).

ZETO-RZESZÓW'S IMAGE OBJECTIVES MATRIX FOR THE PERIOD 2006–2016

The success of research processes depends on their being methodologically correct, though the cyclical nature of their implementation is also an issue. Especially when we examine the image and the possible problems that may occur and which often translate into an image crisis, it is important to be systematic. The results of the image studies carried out in 2006–2016 for ZETO-Rzeszów are shown in the matrix described in Figure 3.

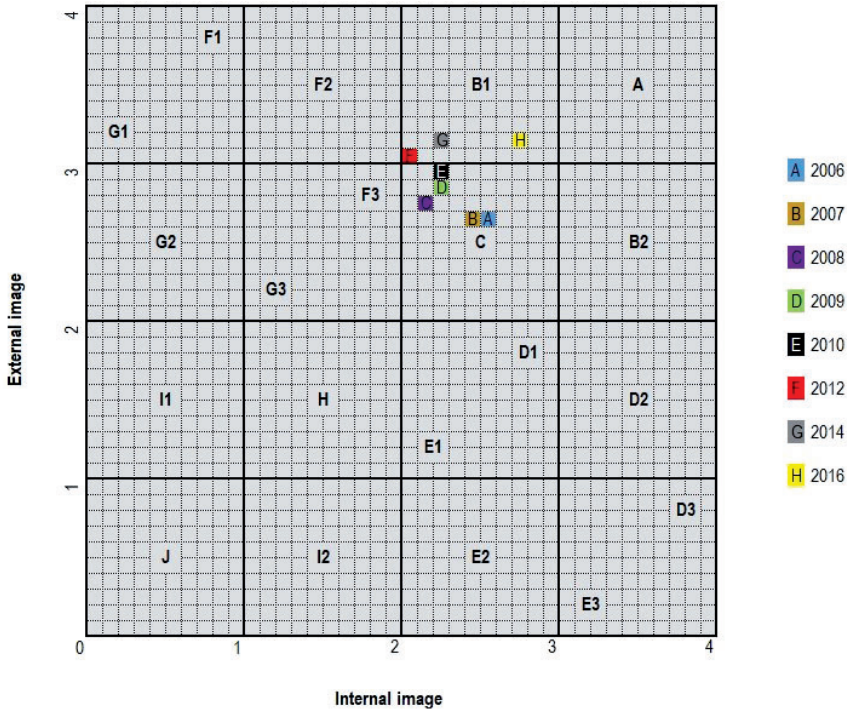


FIG. 3. Position of ZETO-Rzeszów on the image objectives matrix in 2006–2016

Source: the authors' own elaboration based on ZETO-Rzeszów's image research carried out among employees and 200 institutional clients.

Point grids have been used in the presentation of the matrix to allow for a precise observation of the range of changes and their direction (Fig. 3). The research conducted at ZETO-Rzeszów in 2016 made it possible to identify the image point with the following parameters (2.8, 3.2). The company is located on the matrix in square B1, which is called a stable situation field. ZETO has been in this field continuously since 2012. This is a very good result for both internal and external image assessment. However, it must be assumed that a strong image crisis can make ZETO's position worse and cause the image to weaken, which results in a change of the position on the matrix, such as a shift to square F2 due to deterioration of the internal image or to C, if the external image deteriorates.

The present situation calls for an in-depth analysis of these matrix components, reflected in the internal or external images which have been the least often assessed in image studies. Particular attention should be paid to areas (listed in Tables 1 and 2) where the average measured on a scale from 0 up to 4 did not exceed 2.50. This was true of our case: the company's presence in the media, evaluation of price level of the products offered, the quality of the management model, development opportunities for employees, the effectiveness of the employee evaluation system, and a reorganization of the system of motivation. The recommendations resulting from the analysis should be the starting point for decision-making processes of a remedial nature at hot spots.

The results of research done in 2014 and 2016 lead to the conclusion that ZETO has significantly strengthened its internal image (growth by 0.5), while its external image has consistently remained at a satisfactory level. Further, the company's image location has moved closer to square A, which symbolizes a very strong and crisis-free image. If ZETO maintains an internal growth trend and equal status in the external dimension at least, it will move into the image power square in the next edition.

Bearing in mind that the usefulness of image objective matrices is not focused solely on crisis prevention and the organization's present location diagnosis, a wider picture,

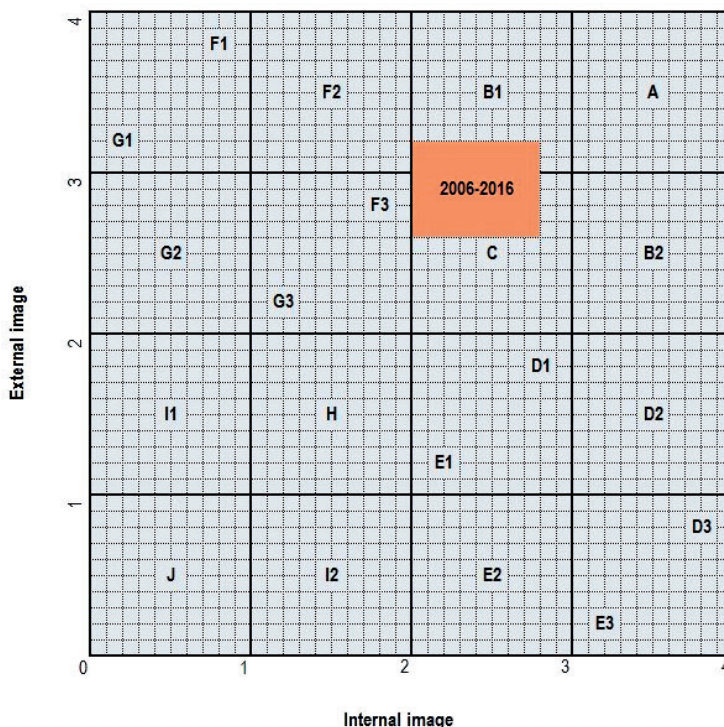


FIG. 4. The image area occupied by ZETO-Rzeszów in the years 2006–2016

Source: the authors' own elaboration based on ZETO-Rzeszów's image research carried out among employees and 200 institutional clients.

one that takes into account previous measurements, can be determined. This is possible thanks to the cyclical use of the matrix, which systematizes research carried out in the company and promotes their unification. Conducting research over an extended period of times provides the opportunity to determine trends in the changes. Over the past decade, eight editions of image studies were carried out for ZETO. During that time, the image objectives matrix was used as a baseline assessment method. The material collected this way is a valuable resource for identifying and analyzing the company's activities between 2006 and 2016, as well as for confirming the usefulness of this method for measuring the effects of communication activities. The following summarizes the image ZETO was located in during the ten-year period.

The data obtained in the research indicates a stable image position for ZETO-Rzeszów in the years 2006–2016. All changes and shifts occurred within two fields of the matrix at high density only. This is in the image centre C square (2006–2010) and the stable situation B1 square (2012–2016) – Figure 4. The distinguished image area field may show that the company has a well-developed set of public relations tools and well-chosen management and communication procedures with its immediate surroundings. Both institutional clients as well as staff members gave relatively high ratings to various image components. However, there is still a risk that a possible crisis situation may weaken the current image.

TREND ANALYSIS

The next element to be considered in the design of image activities is the analysis of the trendline of changes due to the positions of particular points in subsequent editions.

Showing two dimensions of internal and external images on a single chart in a broader perspective brings some interesting regularities to light. First and foremost, the compa-

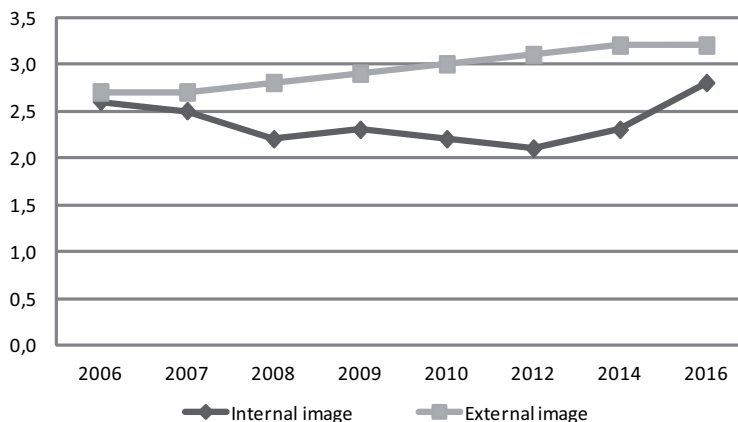


FIG. 5. Changes in ZETO-Rzeszów's image in the period 2006–2016 (measurement using the scale from 0 up to 4)

Source: the authors' own elaboration on the basis of image research on ZETO-Rzeszów.

ny's external image received higher scores than did the internal image among the assigned groups of the surroundings. This is true throughout the decade. While the above data may be positive, note that, especially when assuming the transitivity of the image, the strength of the external image on the internal image is stronger than in the opposite situation. Moreover, an increase in the value of external image points in 2006–2014 can be observed. In the ten-year period under analysis, the company's external image remained stable. The internal image, on the other hand, went through ups (2008–2010, 2012–2016) and downs (2006–2008, 2010–2012). The smallest deviation between the axes on the image objectives matrix occurred in 2006 (+0.1) in favour of the external image. The biggest difference occurred in 2012 (+1.0), when the worst results for the point that determines the internal image in the entire research history were found.

IMAGE GAP AND ITS INTERPRETATION

The last element of the analysis is based on calculating the image gap for ZETO-Rzeszów and its comparison over the years. This is a factor that determines the company's distance from an ideal situation. The gap value closes in the range of 0 to 16 (the smaller the gap, the less the difference between the state achieved and the one desired). The result obtained based on the research shows the space that divides the organization from achieving a perfect image. To calculate the image gap, the following formula is used:

$$LW = (WW \cdot WZ) - 16$$

where:

LW – image gap;

WW – value obtained from research on the internal image (2.8);

WZ – value obtained from research on the external image (3.2);

16 – number of image optimum and image maximum (at the same time).

TABLE 3. Values of the image gap over the last editions of the research (period 2006–2016)

Categories	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	2014	2016
Internal image point (horizontal axis)	2.6	2.5	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.1	2.3	2.8
External image point (horizontal axis)	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.2
Image gap	-8.98	-9.25	-9.84	-9.33	-9.10	-9.49	-8.64	-7.04
Deviation between research editions	–	+0.27	+0.59	-0.51	-0.23	+0.39	-0.85	-1.60
Image gap parameter (W or Z)	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
Ranking that includes all research editions	III	V	VIII	VI	IV	VII	II	I

Source: the authors' own elaboration on the basis of image research on ZETO-Rzeszów

Compared to 2014, the overall image improved, as evidenced by the gap narrowing by (1.60). In addition, in the analysed research edition, the image gap was the smallest in the entire history of the research (-7.04), and the deviation itself also supports a significant change in how ZETO-Rzeszów is perceived by the internal and external environments. The company has a well-established position in the environment, which it developed over years.

ZETO still receives slightly higher ratings from outside parties than from employees. This is also shown by parameter W, which signals that the internal environment of the business is experiencing problems requiring active participation by employee teams and the board. Parameter W is perceptible in all of the years included in the analysis. Moving the value gap into five interpretive areas assigned to this factor – critical position, crisis vulnerability position, moderate position, strong position, optimal position – allows us to conclude that ZETO-Rzeszów had a strong image position in 2016.

The value of the image gap has decreased significantly since 2012, meaning ZETO-Rzeszów's image is becoming better and better. The company is approaching the ideal (4; 4) to which every organization should strive, even if it remains a theoretical reference construct and cannot necessarily be achieved. Based on aggregate results of internal and external research, a number of conclusions and decision-making recommendations can be drawn concerning the image. Inter-period comparisons show that the results of the image studies of this edition testify to the company's strong position over the entire decade. It not only reached the highest point defining the internal image on the horizontal axis of the matrix, but also maintained the highest point on the vertical axis, which tracks the external image. It was among the lowest found in the history of the research on deviations between the matrix axes (3 out of 8), showing the company's development to be uniform, the lowest image gap among all previous measurements, and a significant move towards square A, representing a strong image of a company resistant to negligible crises. Furthermore, the internal image in 2016 was significantly improved over scores for 2014, while the external image oscillated constantly at a similarly high level. Finally, for years there has been a tendency to better assess the external image from the inside, which requires, for example, corrective actions in selected elements of the decision-making process.

CONCLUSIONS

Completed in three phases (external, internal, image assessment), the research project enabled us to optimize the tools used for subsequent image studies, making it easy to see the changes closely, taking into account their direction. ZETO's management board has received extensive material that, if appropriately used, will help show the direction the company should be headed in the coming years. The opinions of institutional clients and employees will help to determine the strategy for future activities.

Looking from the perspective of the many years the research was conducted over using an image objectives matrix, it may be concluded that the matrix fulfils its task. As new methods of measuring public relations effects are sought, and as it becomes increasingly difficult to identify hazards arising from changes in the environment, the matrix is a tool that can capture the symptoms that could be triggered in critical situations. This method also favours unification of research projects and allows for inter-period comparisons, forcing executives to carry out research tasks for comparative purposes as the opportunity arises. This way, management engaged in building the company's image and identifying the areas to be changed and improved becomes much more effective. This method can also be an element of crisis support and can become the basis for a quick reaction. The matrix makes it possible to compare long-term results obtained by the company, and

make corrections to guide activities. Based on the research prepared for the matrix design, it is easy to identify a number of more or less important factors that can strengthen or weaken the perception of a company in its internal and external environments.

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Summary. This article presents the results of comprehensive research on image in the internal and external environments of an organization. During the research, the method of measuring the effect of public relations activities, i.e. the image objectives matrix, was also verified. The above tool is used to determine the image position of an economic entity, and to identify possible problems the entity must address in the range of its internal and external communications. The main conclusion is: The research project, completed in three phases (external, internal, image assessment), enabled us to optimize the dedicated tools for subsequent image studies, making it easy to see the changes closely, taking into account their direction. ZETO's management board has received extensive material that, if appropriately used, will have a direct impact on showing the direction in which the company should be headed in the coming years. The opinions of institutional clients and employees will help to determine the strategy for future activities.

Key words: public relations, measurement of effects of public relations activities, internal and external communication, quantitative research, scale reliability analysis, image gap, image objectives matrix

JEL: C18, M3

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