The Strategy of Vaccination and Global Pandemic: How Framing May Thrive on Strategy During and After Covid-19

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Abstract:

Purpose: Little is known about the framing that decision-makers use to generate commitment from all engaged with vaccinating programs or their effects and limitations in different contexts. This preliminary study addresses this research gap through an empirical study of the Polish national vaccination program against COVID-19.
Approach/Methodology/Design: This paper's insights have emerged iteratively by considering both theory and the empirical case based on vaccination against COVID-19 program analysis. This approach is consistent with an abductive approach.
Findings: A study revealed a need to use framing in developing and implementing vaccination strategies. Lack of framing in strategic communication of vaccination leads to the potentially radical suggestion that government should change their current vaccination information policy if they want to avoid poor outcomes. The findings make three contributions. First, they illustrate how framing can influence engagement to multiple goals; Second, they contribute to grounding framing theory within public management by showing how framing may use across contexts; Third, they elaborate the importance of framing in strategic programs.
Practical Implications: The article brings several valuable pieces of information that can be the base material and reference to further research. It provides practical tips.
Originality/Value: There are several studies on strategy or framing; however, the research question – whether the government's vaccination strategy against COVID-19 uses framing to shape the right message to increase public confidence in the vaccination program was without an answer. It is the first such research in the World.

Keywords: Framing, public management, strategy, organisation, COVID-19, health, medical care.

JEL Code: I0, I1.

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1. Introduction

There are many studies on strategies (Galbraith, 1983; Milgrom and Roberts, 1990; Porter, 1996; 1997; Kaplan and Norton, 2001; Olson *et al.,* 2005; Slater *at al.,* 2011), and there is consensus that strategy is the creation of the unique and valuable position, involving a set of different activities (Porter, 1996). In an unpredictable environment, it seems there is no point in strategy creating. However, one should agree with Porter's statement (1997) that any comments about strategy death as a core discipline and critical business instrument are premature. However, there is one significant problem that the COVID-19 pandemic has underlined. Creating a strategy, defining missions, visions, goals, directions, and areas of the action takes place using language that contains a specific potential of meanings focused on cooperation and enhancing relational capital (Khan *et al.,* 2020). The range of words used is a derivative of socialization of persons, organizational culture, a set of long-term and ad hoc opinions about a given phenomenon. Creating a strategy is a procedure aimed at causing a change in human attitudes, in their behaviour, thinking, motivation, and emotions focused on cooperation.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 pandemic, due to the risk of infection, lack of effective drugs, severe and not fully recognized side effects, and self-isolation, is having a destructive impact on interpersonal relationships. Fighting the pandemic requires reducing human contact (Grima *et al.,* 2020). Hence, in media messages worldwide, the need to limit meetings between people and create technical barriers restricting the possibility of infection is emphasized. It breaks the bonds between people, and public trust is reduced. In such a situation, the COVID-19 vaccine has appeared in the World. At the same time, a large scale of mistrust in vaccinations is noticeable in Poland. There is a research gap about the role of framing in the vaccination program, which must be based on public trust. The research question is whether the government's vaccination strategy against COVID-19 uses framing to shape the right message to increase public confidence in the vaccination program?

The paper proceeds as follows: First, the previous research on strategy and framing reviewed. After that, the research method is discussed. Based on study results, one may offer the potentially radical suggestion that government should change their current vaccination program; otherwise, it will be useless for the State, firms, and society; This paper ends conclusion and opportunities for further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Strategy, Uncertainty, Intellectual Capital

Review literature has shown that strategy was perceived as a kind of planning (Ansoff, 1965; Steiner, 1969). Supporters of the adaptive mode such as Braybrooke and Lindblom (1963), Lindblom (1968), Cyert and March (1963), understood the strategy as the process in which many decision-makers with different goals discuss among themselves to produce incremental, disjointed decisions (Mintzberg, 1978). A

strategy is understood as a vision of the organization's future (Cole, 1959; Drucker, 1970; Mintzberg, 1978). A strategy is understood as a vision of the organization's future (Cole, 1959; Drucker, 1970; Mintzberg, 1978).

Chandler stated that strategy is the determination of an organization's primary long-term goals, the adoption of courses of tasks, and the allocation of necessary resources to carry out these goals (1969). Porter noticed that strategy is a general formula for how a business will compete (1997). Supporters of complexity theory define strategy as unfolding the organization's internal and external aspects that result in actions in a socio-economic context (Stacey, 1995; Morin, 2005). Kvint (2009) defines strategy as a system of finding, formulating, and developing a doctrine that will ensure long-term success if followed faithfully. Successive researchers in more recent times also emphasize that strategy deals with crucial issues for the organization's future (Freedman, 2013; Johnson *et al.,* 2017). For example, how should entrepreneurs compete in the future with aggressive new entrants? What growth options are there for the organizations? What would be the optimal method to achieve desired outcomes, and what might be the resourcing implications? (Johnson *et al.,* 2017).

Strategy rest on unique activities. It means to be competitive; it is necessary to be different. It means deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver a unique mix of values (Porter, 1997). This generalization means that it is not enough to define intended policy towards stakeholders, but there is a need to focus on rivals' different activities (1997). The competitive strategy architecture is based on the free movement of people and capital. Admittedly, Porter listed several factors influencing the erroneous creation of a strategy, but he did it in conditions of a relatively stable environment.

Meanwhile, COVID-19 has changed the organization's environment. The creation of any strategy requires the usage of intellectual capital. However, how to use intellectual capital in conditions of uncertainty? Uncertainty differs from the risk. The first one needs to admit that while the risk is defined as winning or losing something important for an individual, group, or organization, uncertainty is a condition where there is no knowledge about future events. Second, it influences ways of measurement. In opposition to uncertainty, risk can be measured and quantified, and the potential outcomes are known. Uncertainty is linked with unpredictable future events.

Third, it creates another problem. How can unpredictable events influence intellectual capital? Risk can be mitigated if proper measures are taken to control it. On the other hand, uncertainty is beyond the control of the individual, group, or organization (Cook, 1988; Alaszewski and Coxon, 2008; Samson, Reneke, and Wiecek, 2009; Renn, Klinke, and van Asselt, 2011; Pástor and Veronesi, 2013; Surbhi, 2017; Dobrowolski, 2020a). Uncertainty affects relationships between people. COVID-19 is a tangible example of how pandemic creates uncertainty in financial markets and interpersonal relationships and how it affects social behavior. Limiting meetings with administrative bans triggers protests, among others in Poland, the United Kingdom,

France, and Germany. Furthermore, although these protests are different, people's mass participation in these protests is a specific reaction to isolation and fear. The role of information and knowledge in driving any organization is unquestioned. It leads to a generalization that intellectual capital is a crucial factor of organizational success (Edvinsson, 1997; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Petty and Guthrie, 2000).

The term "intellectual capital" refers to parallel with the concept of human capital, which underlines the importance of knowledge, skills, and capabilities that enable persons to act in new ways (Coleman, 1988). Thus, intellectual capital represents a valuable resource and a capability for action based on knowledge and trust (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Schumpeter (1934) has argued that all new resources, including knowledge, are created through two generic processes: combination and exchange. Considering this argument, one needs to note that structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions, which create intellectual capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998), require human cooperation based on social groups' daily activity.

The most crucial challenge for organizations operating in uncertain conditions is responding to unpredictable situations using engaged people. Beyond the realm of rational expectations (Löfberg and Olsson, 2014), these situations are strange events with very low-probability and extremely high-impact or extreme risk events (Ivantsov, 2016). Covid-19 has underlined the importance of human behavior in the success of any program and organization. As the pandemic occurred almost all over the World, and daily media reports enable the analysis of the effects of this phenomenon from a global perspective, one may generalize that the organization may work in an unpredictable environment when is based on social relations (Prusak and Cohen, 2001; Adler and Seok-Woo, 2002; Dobrowolski, 2020a).

2.2 Framing

Any organizational operations require firmness, fullness, and articulation of opinion. In opposition, vacillation, indifference, or weakly held opinions are considered a symptom of decision-makers' weaknesses (Hirschman, 1989). Individuals with different backgrounds and effects of socialization create an opinion about the organization or program and provide them to the outsiders, which may influence them. It would be an ideal, desirable dimension if such people build a stable and consistent picture, be informed, and be convinced of principles and values. However, such situations are rare in the public sphere (e.g., Converse, 2006; Zaller, 1992) and easy to influence by certain information (Sniderman and Theriault, 2004). One may note that the same primary issue's alternative phrasings significantly alter respondents' meaning (Zaller, 1992). It leads one to the central premise of framing theory that an issue can be viewed from various perspectives and construed as having implications for multiple values or considerations (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Framing refers to how people develop a particular conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about a particular issue. Another definition of framing starts with a conventional expectancy-value model of an individual's attitude (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Chong and Druckman, 2007).

During the last thirty years, researchers have increasingly sought to understand and explain the framing effects (Iyengar, 1991; Zaller, 1992; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997; Brewer, 2001). A literature review shows that individuals draw their opinions from the set of general beliefs stored in their memory. Only some beliefs become available at a given moment. There are the strongest from the set of accessible beliefs (Chong and Druckman, 2007). Researchers also tried to explain the strategies behind the creation of frames. Scientists of the social movement literature explore how different groups employ frames for mobilization purposes (Snow and Benford, 1992). Based on this literature (Chong 2000; Levin 2007), one may generalize that framing can be perceived as a tool used by decision-makers to use individuals to expand the particular interpretation of decision-makers' goals, tasks, and problems.

Framing can be viewed in both positive and negative terms. It can be a strategy to manipulate individuals and leads to opportunism. It can refer more neutrally to a learning process in which people acquire common beliefs, as in the coordination of people around a social norm (Chong, 2000; Chong and Druckman, 2007) or program. Finally, it can be a tool for achieving an organization's strategy and realizing the planned program.

3. Material and Methods

Literature studies, analysis of the national vaccination program against COVD-19 published in the Polish government's webpage, and observation of the scale of the country's problems with vaccination of people lead to identifying the following research gap - the role of framing in the vaccination program and the research problem – whether the government's vaccination strategy against COVID-19 uses framing to shape the right message to increase public trust in the vaccination program. The research includes the year 2020 and the first two weeks of the vaccinate program operating. The research conducted using the concept of data and method triangulation (Denzin, 2009), in line with the epistemological pluralism strategy. Consistent with an abductive approach (Lukka, 2014; Lukka and Modell, 2010), this paper's insights have emerged iteratively based on the theory reviewed and the empirical case.

4. Research Results and Discussion

An analysis of the Polish National Immunization Program has shown that its strategic goal is to achieve the vaccination rate in a society that allows the COVID-19 pandemic to be brought under control by the end of 2021 while maintaining the highest safety standards (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020). A well-defined strategic goal should answer the following questions: What? What we do; Where? In what area are we making changes; When? We set the time horizon; How? What we need to achieve the goal.

Based on the above requirements, one may say that the strategic goal presented above, coming from the national vaccination program against COVD-19, is not correctly presented. There is not clear what is necessary to achieve the goal. It is not fully

known what security standards are meant. Probably authors of this program assumed the safety of those who vaccinate and those who are vaccinated. However, the formulated strategic goal should be concise and precise. Otherwise, one must guess what is going on, which may create an opinion that the program is not ready.

Further, in the analyzed national program, it was stated that the strategy serves to plan activities to guarantee safety and effectiveness among Polish citizens. It includes purchasing an appropriate number of vaccines, distributing, and monitoring the course and effectiveness of vaccination and Poles' safety (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020). The content of this sentence shows that its creators seem to equate strategy with planning activities. However, the strategy should be seen as the most favorable path for developing an organization (Johnson *et al.,* 2007). Therefore, it was necessary to indicate that the strategy leads to determining an organization's primary long-term goals, the adoption of courses of action, and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals (Chandler, 1969).

In the other part of the analyzed national vaccination program, its authors focus the readers' attention on vaccine research presentation and how Poland acquires vaccines working with the European Union (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020). Such a lengthy description of activities undertaken by other entities, and do not by the authors of this program, would make sense if it served the purpose of persuading citizens to be vaccinated. Meanwhile, such a goal is not precisely determined (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020). Poles' trust in vaccination against COVID-19 is low and does not exceed 50%, while vaccination will eliminate COVID-19 after almost everyone is vaccinated.

The national immunization program assumes the creation of a credible and widely accessible information platform; creating an FAQ platform on a government service dedicated to vaccinations; launching a 24/7 hotline for citizens and an intelligent chatbot; use of experts in information activities; launching a broad information campaign on vaccination against COVID-19 in the media and on the Internet and distribution of the brochure to every household in Poland (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020). The authors of this program showed tasks, which realization may convince Poles to vaccination. However, the program does not show alternatives if realized tasks will not bring the desired outcomes (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020).

A few days from the start of vaccination in Poland (this research is carried out on January 4, 2021), promised broad information campaign in the media and on the Internet does not exist, and no brochures are sent to each resident informing about the need for vaccination. Instead, there is a scandal with the delivery of vaccines out of sequence to celebrities and politicians. It means that there is a loophole in the vaccine distribution system. It creates a platform for serious questioning the program's assumptions. Besides, media provides information that six people can be vaccinated from one vial of the vaccine instead of the five, as used so far. Such a situation may indicate a lack of efficient vaccination strategy at the beginning of program operating

and increase public distrust in immunization. Paraphrasing Hirschman's (1989) statement, one may argue that implementing the vaccination program in a society with a low level of confidence in vaccination requires firmness, fullness, and articulation of opinion. In opposition, vacillation, indifference, or weakly prepared tasks are considered a symptom of decision-makers' weaknesses and may increase public distrust and significantly hinder program implementation. Too long program realization generates additional costs, including those resulting from under-utilization of the economy threatened by the pandemic and the costs of treating people infected with COVID-19.

There is a lack of strategy for framing the national immunization program (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020). Meanwhile, framing should be perceived as a tool used by the government to coordinate individuals around particular interpretations of the government's goals, tasks, and problems. Framing could work on all available informative channels by making new beliefs about the vaccination program, making certain available beliefs accessible, or making beliefs applicable to desired goals.

5. Conclusion

A detailed analysis revealed that there is a need to use framing in developing and implementing vaccination strategies. Lack of framing in strategic communication of vaccination leads to the potentially radical suggestion that government should change their current vaccination information policy if they want to avoid poor outcomes.

This research makes three main contributions to existing literature. First, it extends theory about how framing can be used to commit to the special programs and their goals as a whole by examining the Polish national vaccination program and its desired outcomes. In the context of multiple goals, the study has shown that framing is a valuable tool because it can persuade program recipients that there are links between program goals that individuals already value and goals that might otherwise be seen as different from their convictions. Furthermore, the study has shown that strategy influence over-commitment of all vaccinate program recipients will be enhanced where they use internally consistent framing that is grounded within the public context in which it is invoked. These research findings elaborate and extend existing theory on framing and strategy, providing the basis for future research into the role of framing in influencing public commitment to multiple goals across a more comprehensive sample of cases.

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