

Campaign Slogans of the Fifth Islamic City Council Elections of Bojnord: Discovering and Understanding of Communication Messages

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Introduction

Contents of the campaign items of the Islamic City Council Elections candidates, which have inherently understood the city through the eyes of the citizens, contain explicit and implicit communication messages indicating that how urban issues are administered by the managers. Therefore, this study aims to explore major objectives and strategic themes hidden in the contents of campaign items of the fifth Islamic City Council Elections' candidates of Bojnord based on four perspectives of balanced scorecard by using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

Material & Methods

The research method, which is indicative of how the project or the research is carried out, with considering the aim of the present study that seeks discovering the macro-strategic goals as well as the strategic themes as hidden messages in the content of the campaign items of the fifth Islamic City Council Elections of Bojnord, relies on the strategy of integrative (cumulative) content analysis. In terms of importance, the quantitative content analysis method has the top priority and plays the basic role while the qualitative content analysis method plays the complementary and secondary role. First, the macro-strategic goals were identified in four balanced scorecard perspectives and their importance and status are obtained in terms of frequency. Then, in the second phase, the hidden strategic theme which lies in the macro-strategic goals obtained from the first phase of the research, was understood and perceived.

The method of data collection was documentary, relying on the textual systems of campaign items, such as brochures, tracts, cards and posters. The statistical population of the research was the campaign items of 194 candidates registered for 9 positions of the fifth Islamic Council of Bojnord. In order to select the statistical sample, the researcher collected the textual advertising campaign items during the final 4 days of the election by walking around the main streets and squares of Bojnord city, where most of the campaigns were held. Since not all 194 candidates of the fifth Islamic City Council Elections of Bojnord have distributed promotional items, the statistical sample consisted of only 54 candidates out of all candidates of

the fifth Islamic City Council Elections of Bojnord, who were chosen non-randomly and based on the availability of their campaign items.

Discussion of Results & Conclusions

The content of the candidates' campaign items of the election of the fifth Islamic Council of Bojnord includes communication messages on the need to improve the performance of Bojnord Municipality and City Council in four balanced scorecard perspectives by answering four basic questions as follows: 1- What values do we create for citizens? (Customer/Citizen Perspective); 2- How to supply and distribute funds needed to create value for citizens? (Financial perspective); 3. What is the system of carrying out tasks to create value for citizens? (Internal Processes Perspective); and 4- How can we learn and improve in the three perspectives of finance, internal processes, and customer/citizen? (Learning and Growth Perspective).

The findings of this study showed that, out of 1175 campaign slogans of 54 candidates of Bojnord City Council, in terms of frequency, citizen perspective (64%), internal processes perspective (20.68%), financial perspective (9.36%), and learning and growth perspective (5.96%), had the highest and lowest concepts in the contextual content of the campaign items, respectively. Thus, 752 concepts under the citizen perspective can be classified into 11 macro-strategic goals, 110 concepts under the financial perspective into 9 macro-strategic goals, 243 concepts under internal processes perspective into 13 macro-strategic goals, and 70 concepts under learning and

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growth perspective into 5 strategic macro goals.

The hidden strategic theme in the citizen perspective is balance and equilibrium in terms of space-location and social characteristics. In other words, in supplying the spatial and local needs of the citizens, balance and equilibrium are principles that give meaning to themselves in relation to the space-location and social characteristics.

The hidden strategic theme in the financial perspective is the desirability of income sources in terms of social justice. The criterion of justice in the distribution of funds is equilibrium and balance in its distribution in terms of space. The criterion of justice in financing is also balance and equilibrium of income combination by diversifying income sources and not relying solely on people.

The executive plan, in accordance with the city and citizens, is the hidden strategic theme in the context of internal processes perspective. This perspective rejects the usual procedure of city management in the country that relies on specific projects of the mayor and City Council members which are dismissed with the change of management (Municipality and City Council). Citizen involvement in the decision-making and the decision-building process, formulation of the executive planning system in line with the features specified in the urban development plans, and the prospect of the city and Municipality are conditions that pave the way for the alignment of the executive plan with the needs of the city and the citizens, dismiss the specific projects of the mayor and individual members of the City Council, and prevent the members from dividing the city in terms of their ethnic and neighborhood benefits and interests. An aspect that will certainly extend to both the financial and the citizen perspectives, and will bring balance and equilibrium to distribution of resources and benefits.

Out of the 38 candidates of the Bojnord City Council election who have focused on learning and growth perspective, the general themes of their goals, plans and slogans are to develop and utilize knowledge resources to improve the performance of the Municipality and City Council. In other words, for about 70 percent of the 54 candidates running for Bojnord City Council election, success in managing the city is dependent on the promotion of the three dimensions of intellectual capital: 1) human capital, 2) structural capital, and 3) relational capital. But, for Bojnord City Council candidates, relational capital is the most important and valuable aspect of intellectual capital to create greater value in the urban management organization. They attribute the successful performance of city management to having useful and applied knowledge among citizens. In their opinion, building a network of interactive relationships with citizens and, consequently, the knowledge gained from them, enhances the understanding of urban management of

city and citizens and adapts the performance of urban management to the real needs of the city and its citizens.

Even though the citizen-customer perspective includes most of the concepts of the content of the candidates' campaign items of the fifth Islamic City Council Elections of Bojnord, the internal processes perspective has the most strategic goals. Since the main operations of implementing the financial and customer perspectives strategies take place in the context of internal processes, the greater number of macro-strategic goals in the internal processes perspective may reflect the fact that from the point of view of the candidates of the fifth Islamic City Council Elections of Bojnord, Bojnord's municipal and Islamic City Council system of affairs are not currently accompanied by financial and customer perspectives. As a result, the outcome of the work done by the city administration (municipality and city council), has not been able to respond enough to citizens' demands and necessities. But, what is the solution to this problem or issue?

The analysis of the hidden content of the campaign slogans of Bojnord City Council candidates indicates that, for them, the problem of unbalanced distribution of resources and interests in the city which arises from the process of accomplishing tasks, such as imposing the desired projects of the city council and municipality on the city and its citizens, as well as the delimitation of the city by City Council members in terms of ethnic and neighborhood benefits, will be resolved by the popularization of urban management. In other words, the solution to the problem is to apply alteration in urban management by promoting intellectual capital and aligning the system of accomplishing tasks with the city and the citizens.

Keywords: Balanced Scorecard, Content Analysis, Elections, Campaign Slogans, Islamic City Council.

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