Introduction

The Austrian Cultural Forum (ÖKF) was founded in 1955 and since 1989 it only held language classes. This private school used to offer more than 100 German courses a year. Since this organization is built to foster cultural dialogue between Iran and Austria, furthermore, OKF invested lots of money, time, energy and its human resource in cross cultural and cross religion activities which can be expressed through art and thus it organizes cultural events like concerts, theater performances, architectural conferences, literature workshops etc.

Being located in northern part of Tehran, OKF has a super expensive building with over 15 rooms dedicated to cultural events such as concerts, galleries, photo exhibitions, literature seminars, music master classes, theater and music rehearsals and of course German language classes. One the most old and expensive grand pianos in Tehran, is OKF’s Bosendorfer piano which is used for either rehearsals or concerts within the OKF.

For being able to have a significant role in opening up dialogue among civilizations, which has formerly introduced by Mohammad Khatami, former president of Iran, OKF wants to close Islam and Christianity up through cultural dialogues, Thus organization tries to have a broad look on art as a subject necessary for peace building between nations.

All of the missions and visions of OKF have one thing in common and that is audience. OKF for reaching its targets and benefit from all of their investments and policies needs to have as many audience and member as possible. These audiences are necessarily Iranian people. OKF has two different audience groups, one Iranian people which include artists, group members, community members, families of the staff and members etc. two the ambassadors of other countries, Austrian residents of Iran, Austrian embassy’s staff and members etc.
having more audience has always been an important issue for OKF, so they have already tried email sending, sms sending, having a poster board in the yard and public announcements but most of these strategies are more of an informational campaign in compare with a marketing strategy. OKF expects more audience through building these strategies and it basically relies on word of mouth strategy because all the above said strategies are based on personal preferences to be more effective, otherwise there are many people who do not come in OKF for seeing the posters or are listed in OKF’s mailing list or text message list.

On the other hand, almost all of the programs which are held within the OKF are free for public and this will motivate people to participate in the OKF programs and they are free to put their name and email addresses for further communication. Although this is a good strategy for gathering more audience but on the other hand OKF is losing some of its potential money resources. While the concerts in the OKF are among the best programs from the genre point of view and it is very inviting to many Iranian youngsters, because of the small size of the hall OKF do not dare to offer paid tickets because they afraid of repelling the audience. Therefore to me, a strategy which can provide OKF with some fundraising and budget making is also counted as a desired outcome.

Situational Analysis

OKF situation can be analyzed from two main different aspects, the first one is the situation of the country that it is located in it, Iran and second its situation among other institutions that it is compared with. As of its situation in Iran, OKF’s economic situation is of significant concern and then Austrian government relations with Iran, thus I start with Economic scan of OKF.

Economic Scan

In the days of recession in Iran’s economy and while there are many institutes which are suffering from economic downturn and along with pressure of sanctions on the economy of Iran, OKF is known as one the
wealthiest cultural associations in Iran. Backed up by Austrian government, OKF has two primary incomes one from their language classes and the other from the budget that comes from Austria.

**Language classes**

These classes are the most crowded German classes in Iran. Over 700 people are learning German language in these classes. Classes are held from 9 AM to 8 PM and each class is 1:30 long. Teachers have an hour break and they teach 5, 25 attendee classes a day. OKF is open 6 days a week so in a week they have 30 classes which mean 750 students per week. Each student pays 250,000 tomans (83$) for a term which is one month and half. So every 90 days OKF earns about 187,000,000 from its language classes so after paying all the staff and rent for the house they can save big deal of money for their projects. For having a better understanding of 187,000,000 tomans I can say that with this amount of money you can rent a big garden for 18 months!

**Austrian Government**

Austrian government budget is for artistic events of OKF. OKF is not allowed to sell tickets for its artistic events. The salary of the instructors who come to Iran is on Austrian government and its budget. The teachers who come to Iran do not have an expense of hotel because on the 3rd floor of OKF building there is a 3 bedroom guest house and OKF can plan it somehow that 3 instructors come together at the most. While I am not aware of exact amount of budget that OKF is getting from the government I know that one of the instructors who was coming 4 times a year, used to be paid 4000 Euro for each time with their flight included. This amount of money is a lot in Iranian currency.

**OKF and other cultural institutes of Tehran**

Although OKF does not pay the musicians who works for it but still because they invest a good amount of money on cultural events and this makes it unique. Along with their diplomatic power, Austrian Cultural Forum
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is almost the only cultural institute that has the power of bringing foreign instructors and put up master classes for them. These master classes are mostly for free and anyone outside the OKF can also benefit from it. As a consequence of these master classes the other institutes have a hard time competing with OKF in bringing standard cultural quality to their educational programs.

Demographic Scan

Most of the people joining OKF are boys and girls from 17 years old to 28. Although within different projects this general demographic might be wrong. For example lately OKF has started a choir for children under 15 so there are 30 under 15 children attending these classes but in compare of 750 language students and more than 100 music students this portion is not a big portion. I take the opera studio as an example

Opera studio

Opera studio is one of the programs that women’s presence is very strong. While singing for women is illegal for women in Iran, OKF gives them an opportunity of being able to sing in Austrian soil! Since OKF is under the supervision of Austrian embassy it has its political coverage and title so it is counted as the owners land. Therefore in OKF opera studio we can see a stronger presence of women than the men.

Cultural Scan

All of the board members of OKF are Austrian. They are chosen by Austrian government and some of them are Art management students of Austrian universities who have taken their internship in OKF, Tehran. OKF has many other branches as well like in New York, but I do not have any special information of those branches. Freedom, free socialization, rich art and education are the main values that are highly appreciated in OKF. People who are attending either language or artistic classes learn how to respect each other’s thoughts and sayings and learn how to do the teamwork. However, this organization cannot respond to its young students
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technological needs. The students of OKF are all from the age of “computer and data”, but OKF with some concerns about its member’s information is not willing to make a big infrastructure of online data like website or Facebook page. Although some of the students have made some Facebook pages or other pages in other social networks but they are not supported directly by the organization itself.

SWOC Analysis

Cultural Products

The rich quality of OKF cultural product cannot be denied. The combination of art thirsty artists with best teachers of a country which is well-known for its artistic history has brought a unique quality to Iranian art. However, having a big artistic group may make it hard for getting some projects. For example one of the most wanted programs of the OKF for other embassies is the opera studio, many times other embassies want the singers perform in their ceremonies and they will pay for that but they never ask the orchestra to play for them because it is big and they do not have enough space and money for such a performance. As the general manager of OKF orchestra I used to make some small ensembles out of the orchestra and used to give them some additional time in the week to rehears any wanted repertoire but with different themes and in these occasions I have some ready ensembles with different repertoires and so we could get the project.

Place

The place of OKF building is one the weaknesses that they have. As a wide horizontal city with exceptional traffic jams, being on the eastern part of Tehran makes it hard for artists of western part to be able to participate in classes. Some these participants might have to waste 2:30 hours just for getting to the institute, so 5 hours in a day is not an amount of time that everybody can afford. One of the ways that we tried was that, we put
classes in Fridays (Fridays in Iran are like Sundays in America, it is end of the week) so the traffic was much better and we could benefit from more people to come.

**Audience**

Most of the audience of OKF programs is friends and families of members but there are many social activists who support this organization for their artistic jobs. While the target of OKF is educating young generation of artists with western art, the audience is more those who want to enjoy the art of this generation. Most of the attendees want to be able to perform in this organization and we do not have many people being interested in managing some parts of the job so when you are the manager of one part, like the orchestra, it means you have to do everything, from putting the chairs for musicians to seat on to road management, doing the contracts, getting a place for performance and etc.

**Strategies**

While in new world most of the marketing strategies rely on internet and online marketing, in Iran because of the restriction of internet usage and censorship these approaches cannot have the expected outcome. Therefore, along with social media marketing and internet marketing, I have chosen three other types of marketing as well to present a real working strategy.

1. **Crowdsourcing**

As is said in About.com “Crowdsourcing is using collective intelligence gathered from the public and using that information to complete business-related tasks. These tasks are normally completed by the company or a third-party service provider, but through crowdsourcing the public assists in the completion of these tasks. Companies are often attracted to crowdsourcing because it expands their talent pool and is often free. Crowdsourcing also allows a company to gain insight into their customers and what they desire.” While there
are not enough budget for doing the marketing through paid ways like renting billboards and advertisement this is one of the best approaches that OKF can use. One of the best ways that OKF can use is outsourcing the preparation of some of the needed materials to those companies that want to make themselves known through OKF concerts. For example, they can prepare a survey and find out which of the parent of the children has the works as a designer and can design the poster or a print shop to print the program and poster, and then they can put their logo on their program. On the other hand OKF can use its member to make a page and carry out surveys on OKF audience about their desires and inform them about the master classes that OKF can present. Renewing the OKF website is another approach that should be listed as the main jobs that OKF has to do. There are over 1000 language student studying in OKF and there has to be a number of them that know Persian, German and English, one of the biggest problems with the OKF website is that it only has two languages, Persian and German, therefore for those who do not know neither of these two languages it is totally not useful. The oldness of the website content is another negative point of OKF website that can be handled by crowdsourcing.

Through these changes OKF can have a better chance of informing others about the activities that it carries on. For a non-profit organization it is vital to have as many cheap approaches as possible, so having as many volunteers as possible is a must.

*Implementation*

This strategy has to be used on a cycle basis. The key dates for using this approach is closely related to the content outsourced. For example if designing of the poster is outsourced, it should be done at least 3 months before concert because it is really important that the conductor and members have a good feeling about the poster and also the designer needs a certain amount of time for designing the poster, on the other hand for having more people who see the poster you need to make sure that it is posted at least before the program.
However, updating the website is something that should be done regularly and with a time period of around twice a week. Although it depends on the amount of the news available but an active organization like OKF has a lot to publish.

2. Word of Mouth Marketing

According to Wikipedia “Word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM, WOM marketing), also called word of mouth advertising, differs from naturally occurring WOM, in that it is actively influenced or encouraged by organizations. While it is difficult to truly control WOM, research has shown that there are three generic avenues to 'manage' WOM:

I. Build a strong WOM foundation (e.g. sufficient levels of satisfaction, trust and commitment)

II. Indirect WOMM management which implies that managers only have a moderate amount of control (e.g. controversial advertising, teaser campaigns, customer membership clubs)

III. Direct WOMM management, which has higher levels of control (e.g. paid WOM 'agents', "friend get friend" schemes).”

Word of mouth is one of the strongest unpaid marketing strategies that is based on the trust and interest of individuals in a company or a special product. For a cultural forum like OKF who provides many different and unique services for artists this strategy works the best. While there some restrictions on other marketing strategies on one hand and the smallness of Iran art society this on the other hand, makes this strategy is the best and efficient strategy that works. Making the OKF known as a pioneer in making standard musical institute is something that by introducing it to artistic society there can be a boost in the number of participants in OKF as well as sponsors who might be willing to cooperate with OKF. The most important part of this strategy is trust building which can be best built by having solid programs and plans. The role of organized master classes in this issue is vital and essential for the
success of this type of marketing because master classes are the most significant advantage of OKF to other institutes. This strategy officially starts with the beginning of the programs and projects. The trust making is a long process which involves many people. From the manager of the OKF to the members, all are important in this process.

3. Direct Marketing

As is written in Wikipedia “Direct marketing is a channel-agnostic form of advertising that allows businesses and nonprofits organizations to communicate straight to the customer, with advertising techniques that can include cell phone text messaging, email, interactive consumer websites, online display ads, database marketing, fliers, catalog distribution, promotional letters, targeted television commercials, response-generating newspaper/magazine advertisements, and outdoor advertising. Amongst its practitioners, it is also referred to as Direct Response Advertising.” Iranian people, especially young generation, are among super cell phone users of the world. Therefore one the most useful marketing strategies are sending messages. By using this method OKF can bring more audience to its programs and make more people aware of its activities. Making a good content which is observed by manager and director of the program is the first step in this strategy. It should be made clear that in this strategy the short message will win the most because people do not have too much time reading a long message or email, so the content should direct to point and short. Because of the unbelievable traffic jam in Tehran, the best time for sending this message is in the afternoon and when people are going back home in their cars because most of the time their car will stick in the terrific jam and reading a message would be really pleasant for them! Otherwise between 10-12 AM is another good time for sending messages. The content of the message should be verified by the manager and the program director and
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the OKF has to provide the budget for sending messages because it is not free. However, fee for sending 20,000 messages is around 100,000 toman which is not too much.

*Evaluation*

All of these methods are for bringing more people in OKF for participates in the activities which are presented by OKF. Therefore, for measuring the outcome of these strategies I would rather doing a general survey among the members and also audience and ask them about which of these methods has persuaded them to participate in the OKF and what do they need to achieve out of this. This way we can evaluate the effectiveness of the institute and it programs. What I would suggest is that the whole marketing process is going toward. Having progress charts and observing the progress of the used methods can be another approach useful for evaluating these strategies and the outcome of them.