**LEVEL 8 DIPLOMA IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

**UNIT 805 – STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

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# Introduction

This report aims to evaluate the importance of media in influencing the opinions of its customers, publics, as well as stakeholders. Within this report, the power of media influence on pressuring governments and organisations will be presented. Karelia is one of the largest cigarette exporters and manufacturers in Greece, and the company was established in the year 1888 (Karelia, 2025). The company is well-known for exporting its products throughout the world, and its main headquarters is situated in a city called Kalamata, which is in Greece. The company has a reputation for exporting fine tobacco products.

# Task 1: Communication Plan

## “Identifying the relevant domestic, National, as well as international media”

***Domestic Media (Kalamata)***

* Domestic media of Kalamata city, such as South Greek TV

***National Media (Greece)***

* Euronews (Greek Edition)

***International Media***

* BBC News
* Reuters
* Financial Times
* Bloomberg (for global market and policy coverage)

## “Media’s perception of the relevant domestic, national and international media on the inter-organisational strategy of Karelia”

Domestic media of Kalamata city, such as South Greek TV, have a mixed opinion regarding the Karelia tobacco company. Though the company is one of the top contributors to the economy of Greece, several negative factors have been highlighted by the Greek TV, such as public health concerns. According to the reports of the Greek Reporter, Karelia is one of the popular brands within Greece, which sells tobacco. In the current times, Karelia sells cigarettes to more than 65 countries, and over 300 million cigarettes of Karelia are smoked worldwide (Chrysopoulos, 2025). Apart from this, Michalopoulos (2025) has reported that the conservative government of Greece is considering bringing a bill within the country which will ban all flavoured tobacco products. This will create pressure on the company to reconsider making flavoured tobacco inside Greece. Due to this, they might need to shift their business of flavoured tobacco outside the country. According to the reports of Business Wire (2022), there are some packaging rules of tobacco companies which has been recently placed, especially on their e-cigarette products, which shows that Karelia will have to follow some strict policies.

It has been observed that the National media of Greece, in general, has a negative perception regarding a tobacco company such as Karelia. Tovima (2024) has reported that there has been a rise in illegal tobacco imports within Greece. Furthermore, it has been reported that 23.7% of the people of Greece smoke illegally, due to which tobacco has a negative reputation within the government of Greece. This negative portrayal of Tobacco consumption can influence the public as well as the opinion of the government regarding tobacco consumption negatively. Due to this, there might be pressure from the government to create some policies that can limit the business of tobacco inside Greece. This can prove to be harmful for Karelia, which has its headquarters in Greece. Apart from this, some news articles have reported that the Ministry of Health in Greece is set to introduce strict regulations regarding the sales of tobacco products, which companies like Karelia sell (2firsts, 2025). Under this regulation, there will be strict control of putting harmful substances into the tobacco. This will force Karelia to modify its tobacco products, which it sells in the market. Therefore, based on the facts mentioned above, it can be stated that National media TVS of Greece are forcing companies like Karelia to modify their tobacco products, which they sell in the Greek market.

International news also has mostly negative opinions regarding tobacco companies such as Karelia, as some popular news media in their article have stated that tobacco is frequently involved in legal battles. According to Johnson (2025), BBC News has stated that some old and famous tobacco shops that were there since World War 2 have been shut down in recent times due to several legal restrictions that government bodies have put on tobacco companies globally. Apart from this, news reports such as Sherman (2024) have also stated that tobacco companies need to pay some hefty money for legalising their businesses in some countries, like Canada. All of these show that performing the tobacco business in recent times has become difficult for companies such as Karelia, which, though reputed, will face legal problems for running their tobacco businesses. This shows that the international media has a negative opinion regarding the tobacco business, due to which many famous tobacco companies that have run a business for a long time have been shut down. Hence, it shows that international media have the power to influence public as well as government opinion, which is mostly negative. The media influence has led the government all over the world to place some strict and restrictive policies on companies such as tobacco.

## “Importance of the media in influencing partners, opinion formers, stakeholders, customers and the public at large”

***Influence on Partners and Stakeholders***

The media has a significant impact on both the stakeholders and partners of Karelia, as the media has the power to influence and control the public perception of the company. According to Freeman, Watts, and Astuti (2022), there are many tobacco companies that have launched campaigns by employing youthful musicians. Hence, it can be said that tobacco companies such as Karelia leverage social media to influence stakeholders and partners and promote their products. Apart from this, it has been observed that tobacco companies like Karelia may employ social media to counter the anti-tobacco narrative. Fitzpatrick et al. (2022) stated that in support of the fact above and stated that tobacco companies use media extensively to counter anti-tobacco narratives. By countering the anti-tobacco narrative, companies like Karelia can influence the government to create policies in their favour. However, there are some biases in the perceptions of the stakeholders, such as health sector stakeholders who are naturally biased against tobacco and focus on the communication of the harm-reduction efforts of Karelia. On the other hand, the politicians view the tobacco company, Karelia, positively for the job creation as well as the development of the national economy, instead of prioritising the health benefits of the population.

***Influence on Customers and the Public***

Other than the stakeholders, it has been noticed that by using media, the tobacco companies can also influence the perception of the common people, as well. Obermayer et al. (2021), in their research journal, have shown that business organisations often utilise media tools for promoting their products by advertising them to a larger set of audience. This shows that the media plays an important role in creating the popularity of the products of a brand. Hence, by utilising media to advertise their products, Karelia can advertise their tobacco to a large set of audiences, which will help in revenue generation for the company. Therefore, based on the facts mentioned above, it can be stated that the media in the current times have become a powerful tool that shapes the opinion of the customers and public.

## “Influence of pressure and political groups and media owners, on the Media's perception of inter-organisational policy and strategy”

***Pressure Groups***

Pressure groups can significantly put pressure on governmental bodies to create strict anti-tobacco rules by actively campaigning against the harmful effects of tobacco consumption. Pressure groups that are anti-tobacco can be seen actively lobbying the media outlets and governmental bodies. Due to the active lobbying on the government bodies, it has been observed that the Government has employed strict rules on the tobacco companies, like they were banned from advertising their products openly (Heidt, 2023). In the current times maximum number of youths are engaged in the social media platforms. Online platforms can be a great tool for countering the news media narratives and highlighting the harmlessness of their products, due to which the stakeholders can influence the government of Greece to make policies in their favour.

***Political Groups***

Political groups within Greece have significant power to shape the media narratives, which can impact the perception of the inter-organisational strategy and policy of a tobacco company. Political groups can influence issues related to inter-organisation by focusing on specific topics such as the health effects of tobacco consumption and presenting them in a way that will force the company to change its policies to save its brand image (Maurer, 2022).

***Media Owners***

The Media Owners can significantly influence public thinking by putting a narrative that will influence the public perception of a company. According to Glogger *et al*. (2022), media owners can influence public opinion, which can force tobacco companies such as Karelia to change their inter-organisational strategies. However, it is important to note that ownership biases exist where the large media groups tend to tailor the messaging that aligns with their economic or political interests.

The media perception of the Tobacco companies like Karelia in Greece is mixed between the concerns of public health and the economic benefit of the country. According to Giannopoulos (2025), the media perceives that Karelia company is ranked 105th within Forbes, which is generally considered popular within the country. Within Greece, the company is quite popular for selling a variety of popular tobaccos. However, the Greek media also has a negative opinion of the tobacco companies on the health of young individuals. Due to this, the Greek government has established a number of stricter policies on the tobacco companies, which are making it difficult for them to sell their products. To erase the negative opinion regarding the tobacco that the national as well as international media have spread about the company will need to advertise their products in such a way that will show that their products contain zero harmful contents. Increasing online engagement with its customers is another one of the necessary things that Karelia needs to perform to explain to its audiences that they use harmless substances while making tobacco

There is our variety of communication tools which Karelia can use for communicating with their stakeholders, such as online platforms, social media, and websites. By using these tools, the company can ensure seamless communication with its stakeholders and effectively relay its plan to them. Employing social media monitoring tools such as Sprinklr and Brandwatch can be an effective method of monitoring the communication process between the company and its stakeholders. Apart from this, tracking the sentiments of the stakeholders is also one of the monitoring plans that can be employed to watch the process of communication between the stakeholders and the company.

Based on the analysis, it was observed that the media was an important aspect and part in shaping public opinion about Karelia Tobacco Company, along with both international and domestic institutions. It also shed light on the negative aspects of organisational tobacco use. In addition to this, the national media has also highlighted the growing health concerns as well as the illegal tobacco trade, which has had a negative impact on Karelia's image in Greece. Despite the legal challenges and public perception losses facing the tobacco industry, the company can significantly leverage social media platforms to counter all the negative communications and narratives about the harmfulness of its products. In this regard, this organisation can enhance brand visibility and brand innovation in the global market by targeting specific consumer groups such as chain smokers. Lastly, effective communication through digital channels is going to play a vital role in creating impact and influencing the perceptions of target customers and also maintaining business success.

# Task 2: Research paper

The aim of this research paper is to analyse the challenges and pressures faced by the media in reporting the activities that deliver inter-organisational strategy and policy. This research paper has been prepared in the context of the Greek tobacco company called Karelia. The challenges and pressures faced by the media have been analysed by considering major elements like political barriers, social barriers, cultural barriers, legal barriers, and the influence of pressure groups. It has also discussed the ways to exploit the media’s constraints and time-critical requirements to promote a positive outcome. It has also evaluated the inter-reaction between the news, public, and stakeholder opinion.

## “Challenges and pressures faced by the media in reporting the activities which deliver inter-organisational policy and strategy”

***Political Barriers***

Westlund *et al*. (2021) have stated that the media operate under significant constraints while reporting on inter-organisational activities. The constraints are mostly acknowledged in the controversial companies like the tobacco industry. The government all across the globe has implemented strict tobacco control policies. The tobacco control policies are mostly implemented by aligning with the Framework Convention of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The journalist covering the CSR efforts of the tobacco companies, like Karelin, may face political pressure to portray a negative image of the company. It may be done irrespective of the efficiency of the initiatives taken by the organisation.

***Social and Cultural Barriers***

Hoek *et al.* (2022) have stated that tobacco consumption is seen as an unacceptable behaviour socially in many societies across the globe. The media narratives are shaped by the cultural narratives of various regions and their culture. The society also raises questions about the health risks and societal harms related to tobacco products. The media is forced to highlight the negative impacts of the tobacco products while promoting them. It indirectly affects the business growth of the tobacco brands. Tupala (2023) has also emphasised the cultural barriers to the tobacco brands. Most of the cultures all across the globe view tobacco as a harm to their traditional cultures. Mostly, the tobacco products are restricted in various regions to safeguard the interests of the children. The media may show reluctance to highlight the tobacco products of Karelia. Karelia may take positive initiatives for environmental sustainability or the local community. However, the media may show disinterest in showing the same due to fear of backlash from the public. Advocacy groups may also attack the media by highlighting the interests of Karelia. It can damage the reputation of the media house permanently.

***Legal barriers***

Several countries across the globe have implemented strict advertising and promotions laws. It restricts companies like tobacco from promoting their products. Caled and Silva (2022) have stated that legal barriers from the government restrict the extent to which the media can promote any event. The journalists are required to assess the complex legal risks while promoting any event or product. The media in Greece may have a fear of breaching regulations while promoting tobacco products. It can restrict the media from promoting the tobacco companies like Karelia. The reporters may be faced with serious charges of public damage due to promoting any restricted product.

***Influence of Pressure Groups and Activists***

Kodriati *et al*. (2024) have mentioned that the anti-smoking group actively monitors the narratives of the media while promoting any tobacco product. Major of the time, the health advocacy groups put pressure on the media to avoid showcasing the positive image of the tobacco companies. The activists also tend to publicly shame the media outlets that promote the tobacco brands. It increases and induces a sense of security among the media outlets regarding the tobacco brands. The activist may put pressure on the media houses to show a critical stance towards Karelia, irrespective of its inter-regional strategies.

## “How to exploit the media’s constraints and time-critical requirements to promote a positive outcome”

***Proactive Engagement***

de Araujo *et al*. (2021) have stated that most of the multinational organisations keep a good relationship with the media houses. It is done to keep a safe and positive image of the brand promoted by the company. The journalists are provided with credible information by hiring subject matter experts by the company. Karelia can also proactively engage with the media in Greece to increase its presence in the Greek tobacco industry. The Karelia group must also shape the narratives of the promotional content through media by hiring a subject matter expert. It can help the company to exert a positive image of itself in the market.

***Simplifying complex information***

Katz (2022) has mentioned that media houses prefer to promote the stories that are easily consumed by the audience in the market. It helps the media houses to increase their audience base rapidly, along with increasing their profit margin annually. The media always requires quick and digestible stories. Along with it, the impactful languages are also used by the media houses to promote their stories. Karelia can also focus on easily understandable positive stories to promote their products. Karelia may focus on human interest angles to gain the interest of the audience easily. Karelia should avoid presenting lengthy reports to the audience.

***Transparency and Credibility***

Firmansyah *et al.* (2022) have mentioned that openness is a key differentiator in the media industry. Most of the media houses are accused of keeping the secrecy of their reports. However, several of the media houses have built their positive reputation by showing courage to share credible and transparent reports. In the long term, the audiences grow a loyalty towards the media house if authentic reports are catered by them. Karelia has an opportunity to tie up with the media houses to showcase the authentic stories of the company. Karelia should share the verifiable data with the audience through the media houses. It can safeguard the interests of both the media house and Karelia.

***Leverage Owned Media***

Papathanassopoulos *et al.* (2021) have stated that major organisations across the globe have their own media houses. It is done to control the stories shared by the media houses. It helps the organisations to create an image of their own without any external forces. The organisation publishes favourable stories along with creating a biased image of the company. However, traditional media show reluctance to show the favourable stories to the audience. Karelia can also leverage owned media houses to share the favourable stories. It can provide an opportunity to control the information that is shared about the Karelia group.

## “Assess and evaluate the inter-reaction between news, public and stakeholder opinion and inter-organisational policy and strategy”

There are many different types of organisations, such as the Karelia Tobacco Company, that have to navigate complex dynamics in all directions. Also, the interaction between all factors influences organisational reputation, innovation, strategic direction, as well as long-term or short-term success.

***Role of the news and media***

The news and media have played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and operating in frequently controversial and highly regulated areas. In the views of Obembe *et al.* (2021), the role of news and media is diverse, such as providing information to stakeholders, public image, crisis management, understanding market value and creating a positive impact on the organisation.

***Public opinion***

Public opinion has been influenced by advocacy organisations, media coverage as well and government policies, has been created essential element in the tobacco industry’s functioning. In addition, in the views of Flor *et al.* (2021), increased awareness of the health risks of smoking has led to strict public policies such as advertising restrictions, smoking bans and higher taxes. In the context of Karelia Tobacco Company, public opinion and perceptions can drive changes in product delivery. It can be stated that public attitudes often change in response to social trends, specifically as younger generations become environmentally and health-conscious, which encourages more sustainable corporate behaviour.

***Stakeholder Opinion***

In the views of DesJardine *et al.* (2023), a wide range of stakeholders, such as investors, employees, various organisational regulators, and target customers, influence corporate policies. This organisation must be consistent with the needs of these different types of stakeholders to ensure operational efficiency and stability. Karelia Tobacco's approach is likely to create an alignment with the interests of these stakeholders and help address concerns about shelf life and long-term sustainability due to increasing regulations. This has a wide-ranging impact on stakeholders in the organisation, such as improved decision-making, improved project success, stronger stakeholder relationships, as well as increased sustainability.

***Inter-organisational policy and strategy***

Karelia's policies and strategies, such as the relationship between media influence, public sentiment, and flexible strategies, are going to enhance their business concept and achieve their goals in the global market. It can be stated that Greece ratified the “WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)” in 2006 and the “WHO Illicit Trade Protocol in 2021 (Global Action To End Smoking, 2025). In this regard, this type of policy in Greece has been followed by the Karelia Tobacco Company to maintain a balance between profit. In the context of strategy, the organisation also engages in proactive stakeholder engagement to emphasise product innovation and mitigate conflicts to create an alignment with changing societal expectations.

## “Evaluate the impact of global news media, and propose innovative methods of utilising this to the benefit of the inter-organisational policy and strategy”

### Impact of Global News Media

In the views of Durkin *et al.* (2021), the perception of media coverage of health risks associated with anti-smoking campaigns can improve public awareness, quitting behaviour, as well as social norms. It can be said that this company can not only enhance its business reputation through global media but also innovate in business and increase its reputation and consumer sentiment in the global market. Also, regulatory influence can be an essential aspect, and the media essentially highlights government measures such as international tobacco control measures, as well as new restrictions. This type of report can build public support for stricter laws, forcing policymakers in order to enact stricter laws.

### “Propose innovative methods of utilising this to the benefit of the inter-organisational policy and strategy”

***Proactive media engagement***: This can be an essential aspect and an innovative method of using it to facilitate inter-organisational policies and strategies. In the views of Castillo *et al.* (2021), active media engagement has been proposed primarily to increase control over narrative, improve brand image, and increase customer satisfaction. However, Karelia Tobacco Company could invest in an active public relations organisation to highlight its commitment to responsible health initiatives, tobacco production, and harm reduction. Lastly, this organisation can essentially exploit and influence media portrayal in its favour by consistently sharing positive narratives.

***Real-time monitoring and analytics***

Real-time monitoring is another essential tool that this organisation can use to track real-time global news to improve policies and strategies and determine potential crises and emerging trends. In the views of Olayinka (2021), Real-time monitoring has helped organisations identify faster decision-making, operational efficiencies, customer insights, and risk management. As a result, this type of capability could enable the organisation to quickly change its strategies as well as policies to reduce negative feedback.

## Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it has been found that the media has played a significant role in shaping the public image of companies such as Karelia Tobacco Company in the tobacco sector in Greece. However, social, political, and legal challenges, as well as cultural issues, have had a negative impact on the entire Greek tobacco sector and selected organisations. It can be stated that this organisation can mitigate all problems by properly simplifying complex information, engaging with the media as well as ensuring credibility and transparency in its messaging. However, this organisation may leverage owned media to enhance its reputation and increase business innovation. Propose innovative approaches to using media to leverage inter-organisational policies and strategies, such as proactive media engagement and real-time monitoring and analysis. This organisation can create an alignment with social expectations and public health concerns with their policies and strategies, and balance the interests of different stakeholders, such as employees, as well as shareholders.

# Reflection

From task 1, I gained valuable insights into target consumer behaviour, government policies and also the important role of the media in shaping public opinion. Additionally, I have learned how national, local as well and international media exert various types of influence on the tobacco sector and selected organisations. In the views of Adnan *et al.* (2021), there are various types of media effects for organisations such as increased brand awareness, improved customer relations, improved customer engagement, competitive advantage and help in achieving global reach. From Task 2, I have been essentially observed that the tobacco industry faces various challenges, such as political, social, cultural barriers, as well as legal barriers. Also, I have realised the importance of using digital tools targeting specific consumer segments for effective communication in the modern business environment. As per the opinions of Oladimeji and Owoade (2024), digital tools have helped organisations achieve improved productivity, improved communication and collaboration, streamlined processes, as well as improved customer engagement. I have observed that this organisation needs to popularise their brand, which requires them to communicate with different stakeholders, such as shareholders or employees, about sponsoring some important events to enhance sales. In addition to this, public opinion or stakeholder opinions have an essential influence on this organisation to create a strong inter-organisational policy and strategy and improve internal business processes. There are various types of global media influences, such as cultural exchange and understanding awareness, public opinion formation and political discourse, and gaining knowledge about the economic impact of the country. I have come to realise that there are many innovative approaches, such as proactive media engagement or real-time monitoring techniques, in order to drive organisational innovation and efficiency in the global marketplace. Lastly, Real-time monitoring has helped organisations identify and make quick decisions and has helped the tobacco industry track products and monitor supplies to other states.

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