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Divided We Stand: Defying Hegemony in Theory and Practice

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The Borderless World According to Bloggers: Prosumers, Produsers, Creatives and Post-Consumers Tell their Side of the Communications Story

Catherine Archer, Curtin University

Keywords: Social media, blogs, bloggers, prosumers, Web 2.0, control

Introduction

The shift to social media or Web 2.0 has been greeted as a revolution and a new paradigm by communications professionals and academics alike (Miller & Lammas 2010; Mangold & Faults 2009; Meerman Scott 2011). Based on its interactive features, Web 2.0 arguably reinforces Grunig's notion of two-way symmetrical communication as best practice in public relations (Grunig 2009). Web 2.0 has been defined as "a collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes. Web2.0 applications support the creation of informal users' networks facilitating the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing/refining of informational content" (Constantinides & Fountain 2008, p. 232). It is acknowledged that the terms Web 2.0 and social media are often seen as interchangeable and that Web 2.0's definition is still the subject of controversy (Constaninides & Fountain 2008). Social media is defined as "internet services where the online content is generated by the users of the service" (Cann, Dimitriou & Hooley 2011, p. 7).

Despite the suggestion that social media allows more interactive, symmetrical communication between organisations and their stakeholders, a substantial portion of the literature on Web 2.0 has focused, consciously or not, on the notion of control and has used a practitioner perspective. For example, in an article on social media and its implications for viral marketing, Miller and Lammas suggest:

Before constructing social media strategies, marketers must ask themselves: how can we engage consumers to promote products to specific communities in a credible, controlled and cost effective way (2010, p 3)?

Similarly, Macnamara (2010) in a qualitative study of senior practitioners found "loss of control" was expressed as one of the major challenges associated with social media. The notion of control was found to be a theme among PRIA registered consultants in in-depth interviews conducted by Archer and Wolf (2011), with a comment from one consultant whose clients were active on Twitter and in the blogosphere:

> *"I think it's just being really careful. You don't have a hell of a lot of control over social media. I think you just need to analyse whether or not it suits the client."*

With public relations practitioners and marketers' concern over control, it has been suggested that active users of social media are "the new influencers" (Gillin 2008; Trammell & Keshelashvili 2005; Woods 2005) and, as creators of their own material on-line, they are also "prosumers", ie. both creators and consumers (Tofler 1980, Kotler 1986).

This study investigates the in-depth viewpoints of a select group of the new influencers/prosumers – Australian mum and dad bloggers, also known among their community as "digital parents". Bloggers write blogs (short for web logs). Blogs are defined as websites which are produced by individuals in a diary format and presented in reverse chronological order. Blogs usually include text, photographs, videos and links to other blogs and web pages (van Heerden, salehi-Sangari, Pitt & Caruana 2009).

This research seeks to discover just how "symmetrical" communication is between public relations practitioners/brand communicators and bloggers within Australia, using a descriptive approach. This study responds to Macnamara's (2010) call for ethnographic methods and interviews to investigate, among other areas, the levels of interactivity, the issues of control and ethics in social media which are seen to be topical but far from resolved.

Blogs – Important for Consumers and Organisations

Bloggers, as new influencers, are being courted by organisations keen to cut through the clutter and connect with their consumers through an influential third party (Ashley & Leonard 2009; Macnamara 2010). The sheer number of blogs is significant and is increasing daily (Kerr, Mortimer, Dickinson & Waller 2012). By the end of 2011, NMIncite, a Nielsen/McKinsey company, tracked over 181 million blogs around the world, up from 36 million only five years earlier in 2006 (see nmincite.com). Blogs as a genre are becoming increasingly important for consumers and organisations (Sepp, Liljander & Gummerus 2011). Blogs are important for consumers as they are read for entertainment and information and are perceived as trustworthy (Armstrong & McAdams 2009; Brown et al. 2007). For organisations, blogs and bloggers are important because they can quickly spread information and opinion about organisations and products (Jones, Temperley & Lima 2009). After conducting a thorough literature review of marketing research on bloggers to date, Sepp et al. (2011) concluded that bloggers have a substantial influence on their readers' behaviour.

Bloggers as Prosumers

The concept of 'prosumers', consumers who are also producers, was discussed long before social media existed (Tofler 1980; Kotler 1986). Writing in the mid-1980s, Kotler (1986) forecast that: "As society moves towards the post-industrial age, so will the number of pure consumers decline. They will be replaced by prosumers, people who produce many of their own goods and services (Kotler, 1986, p. 510)." He argued that prosumers should be looked at as another market segment(s) and marketers should identify those who have a strong need to produce their own goods and "figure out ways in which marketers can help them meet this need" (Kotler 1986, p. 513). With the rise of social media, the title of prosumers has now been applied to social media users in general and bloggers in particular (e.g., Varey & McKie 2010; Pihl & Wahlqvist 2010; Macnamara 2010; Kerr, Mortimera, Dickinson-Delaporte & Waller 2012). Individual bloggers independently produce and promote content for and to their readers, usually without backing from employers. Within marketing and public relations the new prosumer is heralded as an empowered consumer, able to defeat large organisations with a single blog post (see, for example, Hamelin 2011; Kucuk 2009; Weber 2009). It has even been argued that "blogging's ultimate product is empowerment" (Kline & Burstein 2005, p. 248).

However, some sociologists have suggested that prosumers may not be truly empowered consumers and producers. It has been posited that the democratisation of the internet and power for consumers turned producers is an illusion or 'infectious rhetoric' (Beer & Burrows 2007; Beer 2008; Cammaerts 2008; Chia 2011; Comor 2010). For example, Comor (2010) argued that prosumers' engagement mostly serves status quo interests and prosumers are actually being exploited. He went on to suggest that the empowered blogging prosumer is a fantasy and that prosumers are the subject of hegemony (Comor 2010 p. 323). Comor (2010) takes particular issue with marketers and marketing academics for their promotion of the concept of the empowered prosumer.

In this study, we conducted 15 in-depth interviews with bloggers who mostly write blogs relating to their role as parents. Nine of these bloggers accepted paid display advertising and "sponsored posts" and two use their blogs predominantly for business purposes but do not accept advertising or sponsorship. The study also uses "netnography", on-line ethnography, (Kozinets 2002) of the same bloggers' own sites.

Conclusion

Findings from the study show that Australian marketers and public relations practitioners representing major multinationals and smaller to medium enterprises are actively seeking to influence bloggers, who are seen to be gate-keepers and influencers. Industry tactics include provision of free products and services, and social events for bloggers, with the aim of (disclosed and undisclosed) endorsement or at least favourable commentary. However, there appears to be some disconnect between what bloggers expect in return for their posts about organisations and their services or products and what public relations practitioners are willing to provide. While some Australian bloggers are actively seeking sponsorship and paid "product reviews" which are often but not always disclosed, others are eschewing the sponsorship model of monetization (consciously or unconsciously) for their blogs to pursue a) their own personal goals (for example to connect with other parents or to simply write creatively for an audience) or b) business goals relevant to their blogs. This paper concludes with further questions regarding the current lack of any regulations on ethical practice within the blogosphere, particularly from the blogger, but also from the organisational side. We also outline a model of blogger motivations and influences and provide directions for further research.

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Is it a Complex Subject? The Public Relations Firm and Sustainable Practices

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Abstract

Despite a widening recognition and attention to sustainable (communication) practice, it is unclear how the Public Relations firm views the dynamics involved. This paper explores the key challenges to understand these dynamics and discusses the barriers and leverage points as experienced by Public Relations firms. Attention is paid to the different motives and intentions employed when interacting with clients using in-depth interviews, all conducted with a view of making a preliminary attempt at creating a better understanding and possibly mapping new ground for further study. Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Sustainability are used interchangeably, and follow an integrated model proposed by Van Marrewijk (2003).

Keywords: Sustainable (Communication) Practice, Public Relations Firm, Client Relationship, Change Agent Competency

Introduction

The focus on organisations has been more than just tarnished by the global economic events and hardships of the past few years. Phrases such as 'corporate greed', 'corporate green-washing' and 'failing financial systems' have entered the common lexicon globally. By focusing narrow self-interest – the corporation basically facilitated a mistrust – a mistrust hardly ever seen before that hatched the Occupy Wall Street movement and a reason why its message is growing more pervasive (Shaick, 2011). Harris concurs: '…at times it did appear as if some organisations or individuals in them had levels of incompetence and a lack of commitment to their communities on a scale not seen before' (2011:3).

In contrast to Milton Friedman (1970), the notion of conscious and long-term approach to value creation – a socially responsible when put into proper application – serves long-term shareholders extraordinarily well and has the capacity to improve the public's perception of the corporation. Starting from the premise that (a) every corporation has a deeper purpose than merely a short-term profit maximization and, crucially, a responsibility to *all,* including stakeholders, customers, employees, vendors, investors, and community on all levels, and, (b) lack of expertise places relevant constraints on the extent public relation firms understand how they might affect sustainable practice in organisations, and supports the arguments that, to date, the dominant paradigm hold that external legislation or regulation and customers were the most influential stakeholders behind corporations being involved in positive sustainable practice and activities (Knox & Maklan, 2004; Barnett, 2007). Husted and De Jesus Salazar (2006) argue that strategic use of sustainable communication practices, defined as instances where there are clear benefits to the organisation, of whom the *beneficial link* is postulated by many academic studies, better known as the business case for sustainable communication practice prevail (Wagner & Schaltegger, 2001; Mackey & Barney, 2007), albeit a 'complex' one (Saltzmann, 2005).

The practice of management in the twenty-first century requires new knowledge and insights to respond to this age of growing sustainable awareness. Traditional toolkits for managerial problem solving are ill-equipped to respond to these changes.

The public relations firm and sustainable practice

Most Public Relations firms fail to meet the needs of clients when it comes to sustainable communication practice, as argued by Verdantix (2010), an independent analyst research organisation focused on sustainable business, in a study commissioned by Ernst & Young, and bemoans the 11 out of 18 Public Relations firms' lack of expertise to improve or offer guidance in sustainable communication practice in the United States.

According to Verdantix (2010), Public Relations firms face numerous challenges in relation to sustainable communication particularly since sustainability practice was often a complex subject that required the guidance of third-party expertise.

Research design

Since the research objectives are exploratory in nature, a qualitative approach was followed, drawing on five in-depth interviews with senior partners of Public Relations firms in Melbourne, Australia. The in-depth interviews were structured according to an interview guide with open ended questions, to get a broader understanding of the issues highlighted in the aim of this study, which was to shed some light on understanding *how* communication or public relations firms facilitate socially responsible behaviour and sustainable (communication) practices with their clients and the *nature* of such corporate social change. *What* are their (firm and client's) primary constraints and *how* can their clients' expectations to affect this change best be described?

The study rejects a systems approach to sustainability as postulated by Hediger (2009) that highlights a reductionist approach that has not become irrelevant, but *incomplete*. Achieving sustainability would mean a process of co-evolution respecting a 'triple bottom line' as a *normative* reference point, that is, a simultaneous respect for (or satisfaction of) quality or performance goals pertaining to each of the three spheres. This traditional approach has modernist, Newtonian assumptions of equilibrium and linearity, which fail to *fully* reflect our contemporary experience. Modernist problem solving relies heavily on metrics of outcomes and performance, prioritizing these over explorations of *process* as valid measures of viable solutions. The study follows a complexity theory and thinking approach, especially through its social and relational perspectives, that offers exciting new resources for understanding adaptive management systems, as argued by Porter & Derry (2012).

Preliminary findings and discussion

Firms view on their clients' sustainability practice

All firms interviewed felt that their clients' complied adequately with regulatory (and legislative) demands as well as industry norms and expectations, the key reference point being their particular industry, rather than a blanket standard for sustainable practice. It has also been accepted that sustainable communication practice enhances corporate reputation and to some extend could influence their clients' employees.

Knowledge and skills in the organisation

There was a trend towards more communication experts specializing in sustainable communication practice *in* organisations. While five to six years before there were more offers for roles requiring "change communication" expertise, today there was an ever increasing demand for more expertise in "sustainable communication". These were people with a passion for CSR that based their expertise mainly on work experience in an organisation that was one-step ahead in this context. Their contribution was to work with organisations to develop a social mindset: targeting needs of the stakeholders and working with the government to educate and lobby with them on issues important to the organisation. This result in an increase in CSR-programs – the program maintains its historic function as the focus of sustainable practice and activity

in organisations in spite of the increasing societal, market, government and corporate awareness of the importance of sustainable practice. Hard-edged business cases did not always accompany these programs, since, for most, embracing a 'soft' sustainable approach was intuitive.

The changing face of leadership

One interviewee stated: ' Industries differ. Leaders from some industries are more open to sustainable practice than others. I remind them that they must ask themselves not what this approach was going to cost but rather the cost if they did not follow it".

The lack of integration

Each firm 's main obstacle in integrating a sustainable approach in all facets of their interaction with their clients was the (apparent) lack of metrics available to determine the success of the outcomes of these activities. Clients assumed that there was no way to measure the outcomes of these activities further compounded the problem.

Consultants have limited opportunity to further sustainable communication practice and confronted with clients who question its (short-term) cost-effectiveness.
The move away from a primary focus of *shareholders* to *stakeholders* seemed to be one area where the communication firm could make a difference. .

Conclusion

 Public Relations firms are facing a number of challenges and need an improved understanding – beyond the legislative and compliance realm - of its role to affect a move toward sustainable practice of its clients. The lack of understanding eliminates absolutely crucial feedback and will necessarily lead to "surprises" in the practice and policy realm (Liu et al., 2010), many of which could have been anticipated. 'Sustainability is the third disruptive change to hit consultants in the last 20 year after computerization and globalization. In ten years it will become part of everything we do' (Lacy, 2011) .Of particular interest here will be explorations into societal transitions as environmental constraints become increasingly binding, and into technological and institutional innovations that may promise long-term prosperity. Clients appear to be firmly stuck in modernist, linear thinking and problem solving and do not supplement this with a process, complexity theory and thinking approach. This clearly leaves room for the Public Relations firm to fill the void.

 The study considered and explored the range of activities which theorists and practitioners understand as falling within the scope of corporate sustainable practice; analysed the relationship between Public Relations firms and clients as different though complementary practice; discussed the strategic importance and role of the Public Relations firm in sustainable communication practice; and calls upon the Public Relations firm to defend its position as the fundamental bridge between the organisation and society, in the face of challenges from other organisational functions.

 The study serves the dual purpose of capturing important real-world dynamics and shaping the way in which Public Relations firms think and act about the strategic interactions with their clients. The study provides a qualitative description and platform from which to begin an investigation into the assessment and measurement of the Public Relations firm's contribution to affect corporate sustainable practice. This may highlight the critical importance of this key strategic function and encourage Public Relations firms accordingly.

To accomplish these goals will require further investigation by drawing on an arsenal of sub-models based on empirical, location and case-specific knowledge, and contributing to the suppliers of that knowledge in the research and practitioner communities. That cannot be done as an exercise of proprietary model development but will require free sharing and testing of data, models and model runs in an open source environment.

The study exemplifies the variety of perspectives that have been brought to bear on sustainable practice in Public Relations. It also demonstrates an increasing attempt to understand the construct of sustainable communication practice (albeit not all agreeing on how it is embraced by firms) and build first steps in framing arguments that will provide an effective springboard for future research.

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Beyond the catwalk: Exploring social media use in public relations in the Australian fashion industry

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Abstract

There has been limited research into fashion public relations. This study explores social media use in public relations in the Australian fashion industry, using ethnographic inquiry and semi-structured interviews. The findings suggest social media is transforming fashion public relations, but its adoption is uneven, with overlaps in marketing and public relations activity. Participants use social media to engage publics and journalists, keep up-to-date with trends, monitor competitors and promote clients. Bloggers are increasingly influential. Participants perceive they must embrace social media, or risk getting left behind. The findings contribute to understanding diverse public relations practice in a globalising world.

Keywords: Public relations, Fashion, Australia, Social media, Blogging

Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate the use of social media in public relations in the Australian fashion industry. Little academic attention has been paid to fashion public relations (fashion PR), which refers to the public relations role in managing fashion labels or brands, rather than celebrity or model management. Sherman and Perlman (2010) define fashion PR as "being in touch with the company's audiences, creating strong relationships with them, reaching out to the media, initiating messages that project positive images of the company, assuming social responsibility, and even adjusting company policies" (p. *xix*). Therefore, social media i.e. new technologies which promote user interaction and collaboration can potentially transform fashion PR practices. Exploring social media use in this niche sector may inform new understandings of public relations in a time of contested boundaries and rapid change.

Social Media and Fashion PR

The fashion industry was late to adopt social media, ignoring the trend or using it only for sales and promotional purposes (Wright, 2009). Although not referring specifically to fashion PR, Macnamara (2010) states that some public relations practitioners attempt to use social media for one-way communication, particularly for marketing and brand promotion purposes. Greenhill (2011, par. 12) argues fashion brands suffer from "paper pixel syndrome", forcing traditional media relations and promotional activity onto social media and failing to exploit its interactivity. However, commentators believe the fashion industry now recognises the importance of helping "clients manage the new, constantly changing paradigm of digital fashion communications" (Amed, 2011, par. 2), and is beginning to capitalise on the millions of Facebook and Twitter users, allowing fashion labels to connect to new audiences and providing publicity that an advertising budget cannot buy (Prabhakar, 2010).

Fashion bloggers are emerging as a significant influencer in fashion trends, shaping brands and what is on-trend (Dalto, 2010; Kurutz, 2011). Yet Jacob (quoted in Griffith, 2011, p. 3) claims public relations practitioners "are still learning to treat bloggers as more than an easy PR hit." The strong presence of fashion bloggers at the 2011 Perth Fashion Festival illustrates how influential blogging has become, with festival

director Harvey-Hanrahan perceiving bloggers as "a valuable and powerful tool" (quoted in Westlake, 2011, p. 26).

The challenges for fashion PR practitioners are how to engage publics in an online world. International designer labels are beginning to develop effective social media strategies (see, for example, Burberry's (2009) 'Art of the Trench' and Jimmy Choo's (2012) '24:7 Stylemakers'), while in Australia, Jeanswest's (2012) 'What's your Denim Moment?' online campaign successfully engaged target publics. However, three recent examples suggest fashion PR struggles to understand the social media environment. An inappropriate response to a complaint received national and international media coverage, became a trending topic on Twitter, saw Gasp's Facebook page inundated with derogatory posts and the establishment of 'We Hate Gasp' and 'Boycott Gasp' Facebook groups (Cooper, 2011). The Witchery 'Man in the Jacket' campaign aimed to increase sales and raise awareness of a new menswear collection through a fictitious scenario masquerading as a 'real' modern day Cinderella story, suggesting the convergence of public relations and marketing (Macnamara, 2010). Similarly, DFO's Facebook campaign used an inauthentic story developed primarily to serve marketing aims (Mumbrella, 2011). These latter examples suggest a lack of clear boundaries between public relations and marketing in fashion social media campaigns.

Research Design

This study investigates social media use in the day-to-day activities of Australian fashion PR practitioners, drawing on an ethnographic study and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with six fashion PR practitioners. The researcher worked two days a week from February to August 2011 in the public relations and events department in Perth of a national retail organisation (referred to as the organisation), recording observations and conversations in keywords and phrases throughout the day, and writing weekly journal entries. Interviews were conducted in June, July and August 2011 with six PR practitioners working in in-house and consultancy roles in the fashion industry in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth. In addition to questions regarding their day-to-day activities and understandings of public relations, participants were asked about the impact of social media on fashion PR. The journal and interview transcripts were analysed using open and pattern coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

The focus of this paper is the use of social media in fashion PR in Australia. The findings about fashion PR as a niche sector for public relations practice are reported elsewhere (Cassidy & Fitch, under review).

Findings and Discussion

Using social media

Social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, was perceived by all participants to have a huge impact on fashion PR, as something they *had* to engage in, or risk getting left behind. Participants used social media to communicate with editors, clients and consumers; to monitor competitors; and to promote clients. One participant noted its impact on all elements of fashion PR—public relations, media, consumers and the designers themselves, while another said social media has more weight than "traditional magazines and newspapers", citing a client who "at the end of our Fashion Week campaign…was more interested to see what [was] online and what bloggers were talking about her as opposed to what magazines she was featured in." A third participant suggested that social media makes it harder for practitioners to maintain exclusive stories and manage campaigns. This perception reflects the researcher's journal observation when a brand ambassador 'tweeted' the confidential location of a photoshoot, and broke the story to the news media.

The organisation started using social media, primarily Facebook and a blog, in May 2011. Their Facebook profile is managed out of the national office. The Perth-based PR and events manager cannot access the organisation's Facebook profile but is a proactive user of social media, keeping up-to-date with industry trends, local fashion, and competitor news and using her personal Facebook profile for professional

networking. The organisation's blog promotes latest fashions and consumer events, however, the national office dictates the content. The researcher edited a blog post on a Perth-based designer, recording in her journal:

> The post contained incorrect information and didn't give justice to the designer's latest work and its promotion of the WA fashion industry—it lacked local perspective. The blog post clearly illustrated that the organisation views social media as 'just another channel'. It wasn't tailored for the online world, but was taken straight from a media release sent to fashion editors.

This example illustrates Greenhill's (2011) "paper pixel syndrome". Interview participants more readily adapted their approach in social media.

Engaging with, or marketing to, publics

Analysis of the journal suggests the organisation's use of social media blurs the boundaries between public relations and marketing, embracing social media as a new promotional channel i.e. social media is used primarily for promotional purposes to drive sales. This observation confirms Macnamara's (2010) findings, suggesting the possible convergence between public relations and marketing. In contrast, participants perceived social media empowers consumers, as "a customer will probably trust a total stranger who is giving a positive affirmation about a product more than they'll trust the brand itself… that's more meaningful and you'll definitely get more of an outcome from that."

Other participants suggested social media created a more reciprocal relationship: "You're now able to engage people that are actually really interested in engaging with you and they can talk back to you". One participant perceived her role as primarily "telling the stories" of clients in an "exciting and engaging way." These comments suggest fashion publics are viewed as autonomous in that they choose how they engage with online brands, rather than being the target of promotional campaigns. This finding suggests social media may support public relations rather than marketing goals.

Working with bloggers

Analysis of participant responses suggests media relations, celebrity endorsement and relationship management are the main fashion PR activities but relationships with bloggers are not yet as important. However, a participant said she treats some bloggers as fashion editors:

> I don't have time to talk to every blogger. . .but we look for those that have some sort of credibility about them and we work with those directly and we have a relationship with them as we would with someone from a newspaper.

Influential bloggers receive front row invitations to fashion shows, and their tweets and updates are: "bringing the consumers closer to the brands…an everyday Australian could feel like they were front row simply by logging onto Twitter." Another participant acknowledged bloggers were transforming fashion PR, as a standard media release did not suffice: "now everyone wants something very different everyday. Especially with the fashion bloggers—they all want different answers and they all want to delve a bit deeper and get more of an insight into the label rather than just the concepts behind the collection."

Conclusion

Social media is used inconsistently in fashion PR. The organisation used social media primarily for promotional and marketing purposes, whereas the interview participants aim to engage various publics through social media, but acknowledge that public relations and marketing activity "blend" into each other (Cassidy & Fitch, under review). The use of ethnographic inquiry and semi-structured interviews allowed unique insights into the everyday practices, perceptions and experiences of fashion PR practitioners,

addressing calls for more research into diverse public relations practice (McKie & Munshi, 2007) and new understandings of public relations focusing on its potential for engaging publics through social media (Kent, 2010; Wright & Hinson, 2010).

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Are communities communicating, developing social capital and tapping into the network society?

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Abstract

When organisations communicate and engage with their communities they have an opportunity to connect and develop relationships and networks important to their social and overall capital development. This paper suggests that organisations that tap into online networks develop some new relationships with their communities but issues such as access (to social media), and the skill to engage effectively online, indicate that multifaceted communication is necessary to engage with many players in multi-networks critical to sustain social capital. A qualitative study of three regional communities suggests a 'social capital communication paradigm' for organisations and their regional communities.

Keywords: Social capital, Community, engagement, networks, network society

Introduction

Social capital has been researched and explored in many disciplines (Batt, 2008). Social theorists such as Coleman (1990) and Putnam (1995) have been at the forefront of social theory development focusing on the macro and micro components of social capital. Social capital is part of the overall capital of organisations, as Bourdieu (cited in Edwards, 2008) contends, four types of capital are important to organisational status; financial capital, social capital, cultural capital that includes educational and cultural perspectives, and, symbolic capital. Bourdieu (1986) proposes that the more networks individuals have the more successful they will be developing social and human capital. However, as multiple networks are dynamic and complex it is important to also consider the relational context of these networks, their value and benefit. The dense networks that Coleman (1988) suggests are important to trusting relationships seem to be more effective when they are underpinned by shared values (Nahapiet & Ghoshal 1998), and they are easier to sustain in face-to-face, rather than electronic mediated networks and forums. A diversity of networks in the network society that some scholars (Tampere, 2011, Macnamara, 2012) refer to in relation to the work of Manuel Castells and his emphasis on global media and the "*global civil society*" (Macnamara, p.236), proposes technological networks where communication dialogue and exchange take place on mass. In this paper tapping into the network society suggests a local, regional context for communication exchange where social media localizes conversations and online communication becomes one of many forms of regional communication.

For Putnam, the primary scholar underpinning the research reported into this paper, social capital "refers to our relations with one another" (1995, p.665) where trust is important to the connections that individuals have with each other and networks are the "embodiment of past success at collaboration" (Luoma-aho, 2009, p. 35). Putnam's work in Europe and America suggests that social capital is a complex concept as it seems to be positive in terms of the relationships that develop and the community engagement that is possible when networks thrive, but twenty five years of declining confidence related to the "erosion of social capital" (Pharr, Putnam, Dalton, 2000, p. 22), indicates that there is often a greater focus on individualism, and individual benefit. There is a declining sense of community associated with declining social capital (Luoma-aho, 2009). Sander and Putnam (2010) posit that communicating on the internet, or through social media-Facebook and Twitter, are not necessarily engaging online communities or online users with their communities-individuals move in and out of conversations online. The mix of virtual and social ties indicate that face-to-face connections are important to complement virtual connections.

In the network society many players contribute to the the way networks are established and thrive, or begin to falter; Tampere's view of the (2011, p.56) "interactive space of communication, centered around mass media and the internet" does not resonate with the research reported in this paper; an empirical study of three regional communities reflects a localized communication paradigm.

Qualitative research: a regional perspective

A qualitative, pilot study of three regional communities was chosen for this study as they reflected varied stages of community development; a mining town with a newly established community council, an established agriculture centre in Mount Gambier that was experiencing challenges to its community development, and a thriving, engaged Canadian communities in Vancouver Island, Canada. Research by Chia and Peters (2008, 2009) indicated that Canadian models observed in Halifax and Toronto provide benchmarks for community engagement and they give some insight into the way social capital can be sustained.

As social capital is about relationships and networks, a qualitative study was considered important as it allowed the researcher to understand from the inside, what networks mean to individuals, how relationships are formed, and the communication that sustains them. Qualitative research "aims at understanding the phenomenon or event under study from the interior" (Flick, 2006, p.74), or as I would put it, from the inside, the inner feelings and viewpoints. As part of a construction of reality qualitative study also provides a richer context (Stacks, 2011) than quantitative study as there is opportunity to unpack meanings, probe and view social capital through the lens of organisations and their communities. The key research questions, What is the role of communication in regional communities', social capital development and what are the most effective ways to communicate to, and with community members?, framed three focus groups, conducted in each community, and follow-up interviews with eight Roxby Downs participants, 11 Mount Gambier participants and 12 Canadian participants, including some focus group members and others suggested by the focus group. Field notes were prepared in the additional interviews with community project staff, and in the meetings with a regional mayor and other support staff. Sampling was initially purposive including local media managers, community council members, community public relations managers and coordinators that were selected by community leaders for the research, but snowball sampling expanded the interviews to include communication managers and community coordinators and leaders. Interviews were transribed and coded as themes and sub themes were identified.

Developing social capital and re-engaging communities

In the three regional communities community engagement was affected by the way organisations and their communities communicated with each other, informed each other, or did not include each other. As the focus groups and the interviews progressed, each of the communities referred to the need to host the difficult conversations that take place when communities are challenged. Organisations such as councils and Credit Unions, said that they provided a place through Facebook, email, telephone conversations, or a meeting point in a community cafe, to extend the conversations important to their community. There was increasing evidence of the importance of Facebook and Twitter to communicate and engage with community members who had left the community, or who may be in neighbouring communities, but social media also had its limitations.The sense of community was challenged as some of the youth in the remote mining town used social media to vent their frustrations and disappointments about a lack of community support, whilst others in the Canadian community were newcomers to social network sites. They needed assistance to interact and engage with others in the virtual community.There were also issues of access so that each of the communities began to provide community facilities for unemployed and disadavantaged youth to communicate.

In each of the communities community members were communicating through social media and contibuting to community dialogue, but they also wanted to communicate face-to-face in meetings, through events and participate in special celebrations. Social media became a starting point for dialogue, or attempting to have a voice in the community; it was a catylist for further conversation. Longterm connections began with

participation in special events such as jazz festivals, refugee welcomes, and 'help the helper programs' set up for not-for-profit, support groups. Community leaders, or champions facilitated and supported community engagement programs so that ongoing communication could be planned, simultaneously as regional media, and regional newsletters told the stories of the three communities. In this way communities learnt about each other and established a legacy of engagement; that was their social capital.

This exploratory research inidicates that network development can be fostered when social media is one platform for the engagement of new members, concurrently as traditional communication, through meetings and community events connects and sustains communities. Sander and Putnam's (2010) doubts about online connectedness and social capital development is one that I share. As I heard the stories of community members, local networks and relationships framed community social capital. Tampere's (2011) persepective of the wider global network society was not shared by the regional communities in the study reported here. Rather, the notion that the virtual and physical places together increase opportunities to interact, or I would say enhance relational possibilities (Blanchard and Horan,1998), reflects the experience of the regional communities. These communities developed trust with organisations that suppported them and genuinely worked with the marginalised and newcomers to include them in their activities. Weak ties that come from extensive networks (2001,Wellman, Hasse, Witte & Hampton) indicate that the real issues is about shared values and the quality of network relationships that strengthen communities and develop social capital alongside other forms of capital. The study here indicates that online communication can begin community conversations but physical relationships and face-to-face communication creates the communication paradigm for engaged communities to sustain social capital.

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Aboriginal Public Relations: An Exploration of the Balance of Aboriginal Cultural Competency and Public Relations

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Abstract

Aboriginal public relations involves communicating to and/or on behalf of Aboriginal people, Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal communities. Although an important and emerging field, little is known about Aboriginal public relations in scholarship leaving a gap in knowledge and practice. This paper explores the practice of Australian Aboriginal public relations by considering the balance of public relations and Aboriginal cultural competency knowledge in public relations practitioners working for Aboriginal community controlled organisations. Specifically, the paper will uncover cultural backgrounds, public relations qualifications and experiences, levels of Aboriginal cultural competency knowledge and perceptions and values of these skills and backgrounds.

Keywords: public relations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, indigenous, Aboriginal public relations, Aboriginal communications

Introduction

In New Zealand, Canada, and the United States of America, numerous studies and resources exist that provide insight into the field of indigenous public relations (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [BC Region] & Tewanee Consulting Group, 2007; Comrie & Kupa, 1998; Morton, 2002; Motion & Leitch, 2001; Motion, Leitch & Cliffe, 2009; Smith, 2005; The First Nations Health Council, 2011; First Nations University, n.d.; First Nations Technical Institute, n.d.; and Weaver, 2011). At present, New Zealand's Maori public relations practice have identified 'a number of key factors to be considered when dealing with Maori publics' that run parallel with mainstream public relations/communication practice and theory and Maori cultural knowledge (Comrie & Kupa, 1998, p. 43). Specifically, understanding and respecting Maori cultural sensitivities, knowledge and customs are vital elements to public relations programs and designs (Comrie & Kupa, 1998, p. 43).

In the United States of America, Smith argues that 'Native Americans are increasingly exercising a presence in public relations and the media' (2005, p. 59). He states that 'most tribes, Native nations or reservations have their own public relations department or functions, as do many Native-related organizations…and at least one Native-owned public relations agency exists' (Smith, 2005, p. 59). Canada's indigenous First Nations organisations are also beginning to see the necessity and relevance of public relations when communicating with their communities. The Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (BC Region) & Tewanee Consulting Group advocate that 'communications is one of the foundations for the success of First Nations organizations' (2007, p. 3). Particularly, this group have developed a communications toolkit to guide communication to and/or on behalf of First Nations people (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (BC Region) & Tewanee Consulting Group, 2007). Canada's indigenous people are emerging as leaders in indigenous public relations. Thus far they coordinate a First Nations communication conference (Eliana, 2010; Billingham, 2010) and provide specialised degrees and diplomas in indigenous public relations and communications (First Nations University, n.d.; First Nations Technical Institute, n.d.).

In Australia, no set definition of Aboriginal[1] public relations exists. Comrie and Kupa describe Maori public relations as '[interpreting] a Maori public to an organization or a Maori organization to a public' (1998, p. 43). This paper defines the Australian Aboriginal public relations profession as communicating to and/or on behalf of Aboriginal people, Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal public relations involves a combination of Aboriginal cultural knowledge, values and protocols and mainstream public relations. Aboriginal public relations and marketing resources include Aboriginal social marketing (Department of Health and Ageing, 2010; McDonald, Stavin, Bailie & Schobben, 2011), web marketing in Indigenous micro-enterprises (Cardome & Rentschler, 2006) and marketing Aboriginal apprenticeships (Industry Training Australia, n.d.). Particularly, the latter resource highlights the differences between mainstream and Aboriginal marketing, offering practical advice on engaging and partnering with Aboriginal communities, advertising in the Aboriginal media, modifying mainstream marketing and communications, and face-to-face promotions (Industry Training Australia, n.d.).

The relevance of Aboriginal cultural competency[2] and public relations in Aboriginal community controlled organisations

Aboriginal community controlled organisations in Australia aim to service and benefit Aboriginal people and communities in a variety of sectors such as legal, health, art and employment (Hunt & Smith, 2005, p. 3). Aboriginal community controlled organisations are important vehicles for maintaining Aboriginal self-determination and require effective public relations to develop and sustain relationships, communicate services and maintain authenticity and reputations. The Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (BC Region) & Tewanee Consulting Group (2007, p. 3) advocate that 'communications is one of the foundations for the success of First Nations organizations' and effective communication in an indigenous organisation is essential to raising its profile and building trust, relationships, and credibility amongst its publics (2007, p. 4). Morton agrees, arguing that 'Native American organizations are helping their people partially through the use of public relations' (2002, p. 38), while Comrie and Kupa include that 'communication and public relations with the indigenous Maori people have become vital for a number of social, economic and political reasons' (1998, p. 42).

Aboriginal community controlled organisations require qualified and competent public relations practitioners with a good understanding of Aboriginal issues and culture for culturally relevant and successful communications. Comrie and Kupa (1998) and Motion, Leitch and Cliffe (2009) agree, suggesting that cultural competency is fundamental in a public relations practitioner working with indigenous people or organisations.

Methodology

The findings of this paper were guided by a combined qualitative framework of ethnography and indigenous methodologies (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Martin, 2008; Prior, 2007; Smith, 1999) that assured a methodology appropriate for researching an Aboriginal topic. This study maintained Aboriginal community and participant approvals and aimed to benefit the Aboriginal community. Three Aboriginal community controlled organisations in a state capital city were selected, ranging in sectors such as health, legal services, and the arts. Three CEOs, one board member, three communications officers and one external public relations consultant from all organisations were interviewed to uncover cultural backgrounds, public relations qualifications and experiences, levels of Aboriginal cultural competency knowledge, and perceptions and values of these skills and backgrounds.

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[1] Aboriginal will be used throughout to encompass both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. It is acknowledged however that both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have unique and separate cultures. The Australian use of the term Indigenous will only be used when quoting, paraphrasing or referencing literature.

[2] Aboriginal cultural competency describes a person who has a good understanding and knowledge of Aboriginal culture and issues. Also describes a person who has the skills to work effectively with Aboriginal people and communities.

Findings of the Study

The results of the study revealed that the communications officers and the external public relations consultant were of non-Aboriginal background, not all qualified (with half holding marketing and journalism qualifications) and gained most of their professional public relations knowledge purely from experience. They each identified that their main public relations strategies included relationship management, Aboriginal community consultation and engagement, integration of cultural elements in the public relations and understanding and targeting audiences. It was found that their most common form of communication was corporate newsletters and the limitations in their roles consisted of the cultural challenges in promoting the organisation and the difficulty in selling positive stories to the media. The findings discovered that the CEOs and the board member had a good understanding of public relations; however often confused it with marketing. Each noticed the difference between mainstream public relations and Aboriginal public relations, with one noting that Aboriginal public relations involves multiple staff undertaking the public relations in all levels of the organisation.

All of the CEOs and the board member indicated a preference to employ Aboriginal people with both public relations and Aboriginal cultural competency knowledge. The findings however revealed a lack of Aboriginal public relations practitioners in the organisations (due to their limited numbers) and public relations practitioners with no prior knowledge of Aboriginal cultural competency. The majority of the CEOs and the board member indicated preference towards a competent public relations practitioner (with no Aboriginal cultural competency knowledge) over an Aboriginal culturally competent employee with no public relations knowledge. One CEO however placed higher preference on Aboriginal cultural competency (and Aboriginality) over public relations, expressing that public relations is easier to learn. One other also suggested the potential to train and develop Aboriginal people in public relations roles.

Discussion

Ideally, the CEOs and the board member aspire for an Aboriginal public relations practitioner with both public relations and Aboriginal cultural competency knowledge and experience. In reality, the organisations' current communications officers and external public relations consultant do not align as they were not all qualified (with only half having relevant qualifications in journalism and marketing), of non-Aboriginal background and not knowledgeable in Aboriginal cultural competency prior to positions. In contrast, Comrie and Kupa (1998) determined that public relations qualifications and experience come first and Maori cultural knowledge and sensitivity come second. They specified that although Maori public relations practitioners are highly valued (Comrie & Kupa, 1998, p. 42), any public relations practitioner with understanding and sensitivity towards Maori culture can work with or for Maori communities and organisations (Comrie & Kupa, 1998, p. 46).

The results and the literature demonstrate that although both public relations qualifications and knowledge of Aboriginal culture are requested in Aboriginal public relations, competent public relations practitioners can work in Aboriginal community controlled organisations if trained in Aboriginal cultural competency knowledge. Within the organisations, the findings indicated that only half of the communications officers were relatively qualified in public relations (or an equivalent field), highlighting the need for further training in public relations. This paper suggests that Aboriginal community controlled organisations employ exceptionally skilled public relations practitioners to successfully promote their organisation and contribute to Aboriginal self-determination.

This paper identifies the need to increase the number of Aboriginal public relations practitioners in Australia. This could be undertaken by promoting the study of public relations to potential Aboriginal students and current Aboriginal high school students, creating pathways to develop urban Aboriginal people in public relations roles (particularly in gaining tertiary qualifications) and providing specialised community based Aboriginal public relations programs to students from regional, rural and remote areas. Furthermore, Comrie and Kupa (1998) and Motion, Leitch and Cliffe (2009) specifically argue the importance of Maori knowledge

and sensitivity as requisite features in both the Maori and New Zealand public relations practice. Thus, to increase the number of Aboriginal culturally competent public relations practitioners in Australia, Universities and TAFEs could consider integrating Aboriginal content into their public relations (and communications) curriculums and public relations practitioners could undertake Aboriginal public relations/Aboriginal cultural competency training.

Further research in the underdeveloped field of Aboriginal public relations is crucial in better informing theory and practice. Limitations of this paper included a small selection of organisations, a limited access to larger public relations departments and a restricted geographic location.

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Changing Borders of Communication: Why (PR) + (Engagement) = Social Licence to Operate

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Taimor Hazou, Sinclair Knight Merz

Abstract

Changes in the global and online environment have broken down physical and geographical barriers in the real world; communities can come together without needing to do so physically. As communities become increasingly savvy, the communication industry must emulate the communities we aim to work with. We must break down barriers and borders and develop a more holistic approach involving the integration of both public relations and stakeholder engagement. This paper examines the reasoning why communication disciplines need to find an integrated communication approach in order for companies to develop a social licence to operate.

Keywords: Stakeholder Engagement, Social Licence to Operate, Communication, Public Relations, Return on Investment

Introduction – Global Communities

The idea of a global community is not a new one. Globalisation acknowledges the shrinking of physical distances through online information channels and new media. Communities are now able to form virtually in the online world. Tools such as Facebook, Ning and Twitter have the ability to connect physically separate communities into one global community. Savvy community members can easily develop their own media content to share their opinions, experiences and feedback with other stakeholders and communities. Armed with these tools any person or community can ensure his/her voice is heard.

Organisations (including governments) looking to undertake large projects need to consider the communication channels available to community members to share information, news and views or to emotionally unite individuals into a very real and vocal community.

Organisations that have traditionally only implemented risk mitigation measures relating to financial loss, legal obligation or personnel safety, often underestimate the social risk and the ability of an oppositional community to hinder, or even prevent entire projects.

However this is slowly changing. Reputation management focused on both communication in the media and with the community is becoming increasingly important.

Mining executive, Yani Roditis, Chief Operating Officer of Gabrielle Resources, says "It used to be the case that the value of a gold mine was based on three variables: the amount of gold in the ground, the cost of extraction and the world price of gold. Today, I can show you two mines, identical [in terms of] these three variables that differ in their valuation by an order of magnitude. Why? Because one has local support and the other doesn't." (Henisz, Dorobantu and Nartey, 2011)

Community members often and understandably want to know: what does this project mean for me? How will the new road, mine or rail line affect me, my life, my family and my home? The challenge for organisations and governments is to answer these questions and engage communities in order to gain their support. This

notion of needing to gain community support as a 'must-have' has given way to the term 'social licence to operate'.

Communication and social licence to operate

Organisations are increasingly aware that reputation management goes well beyond just a glossy brochure. What happens at a local level can have a far reaching, if not global, impact. The media is often quick to take the side of the lone battler pitched against the giant corporation. To avoid this from occurring, organisations need to work closely with the communities in which they operate.

Organisations need to respond to this evolution by moving away from traditional campaigns that 'shout' or tell people what they need. Instead, they need to holistically engage stakeholders and communities by listening to them and becoming a part of the community and the conversation in order to operate successfully. These are the hallmarks of good public diplomacy. Organisations need to gain the support or permission from both key stakeholders and the community for their infrastructure projects to be successful and to develop a lasting legacy. In some projects it is about 'humanising or socialising' an organisational entity so it interacts as a member of the community.

As communities grow and become more interconnected, organisations also need to grow and foster their own role within their stakeholders or communities. By integrating communication campaigns that involve traditional public relations **and** stakeholder engagement, organisations can actually connect with their audiences. This approach not only helps an organisation's project to proceed, but also allows organisations to address community concerns, mitigate social risks, manage their brand and build their reputation.

Earning a social licence to operate

In order for a business to earn and maintain a social licence to operate when it comes to community infrastructure projects it is vital to develop an open and transparent relationship with the community and demonstrate a genuine interest in what concerns them. It is equally, if not more important, to follow through on issues raised and to deliver on any promises made. Other important factors to consider in earning a social licence to operate and how to achieve them are detailed below.

Understand community concerns and the broader context
To develop a relationship with the community it is crucial to first gain an understanding of their key concerns and associated issues. Through open and transparent discussions with stakeholders, organisations are able to identify key concerns and where possible help to address or minimise these in order to develop a social licence to operate.

One example of a well-earned social licence to operate is the Kingsgrove to Revesby Quadruplication Project in south west Sydney, Australia. The Kingsgrove to Revesby Quadruplication (K2RQ) project involved the construction of a second pair of train tracks with associated bridge and station works to allow physical separation of local and express train services operating on the East Hills Line in Sydney. SKM worked as part of an Alliance with Leighton Contractors and the Transport Construction Authority (now part of Transport for NSW) to engage and communicate with 10,000 affected stakeholders, including local residents, schools and businesses from five different suburbs.

In order to develop a successful engagement program it was important to understand the broader context and the area's history. A number of stakeholders were experiencing 'construction fatigue' following a previous project while others had never experienced intensive construction work. Overall, the community was not open to another construction project that would continue for four years. Understanding this, SKM worked with our Alliance partners to help the K2RQ project secure and maintain community understanding, support and acceptance.

Given the community's stance toward construction, an integrated communication program, involving traditional public and media relations tools as well as extensive community engagement methods, was created to take the "lived experience" of residents, local businesses and schools into account during construction. For example, our research identified that elderly residents and businesses were concerned about access issues related to road closures. To mitigate these concerns a shuttle bus service was developed to maintain access. To address school concerns about student safety, a special art competition was developed encouraging students to decorate construction fencing near their local school.

Due to the level of engagement and the trust developed between the project team and the community, the project's success was demonstrated by the genuine community support for K2RQ initiatives, consistently superior six-monthly audit rankings, only four out of 125 businesses lodged a compensation claim and only nine complaints on average per month were registered during the four year project.

FIGURE 1: SCHOOL CHILDREN DECORATING CONSTRUCTION K2RQ PROJECT FENCING

Tailor communication and engagement to stakeholders
By tailoring communication and engagement strategies directly to individual stakeholders, organisations are better able to identify their concerns, obtain feedback and encourage community acceptance and approval of a project. An amalgamation of traditional communication, engagement and new media tools is also required to achieve this kind of project approval.

SKM adopted this approach on the Rowville Rail Study in Melbourne, Australia. We involved the community across all aspects of the project in a way best suited to the key stakeholders. The feasibility study involved examining options for a 12km rail link for the Monash and Rowville areas in Melbourne. Given the high number of students living in the area and potential interest in the project, online engagement was seen as the most effective method to reach the target audiences within a shortened consultation timeframe. The project also had to contend with a wide diversity of public opinion and consultation fatigue among the community, which saw the project as 'yet another government study'.

A specific social media action plan was developed which encompassed the use of a weblog and discussion board, a voting and ideas board as well as social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter. A unique engagement approach linking Google Earth geo-spatial data to an online community engagement forum also allowed public comment to be directly linked to GPS locations so potential rail line alternatives could be identify.

Online engagement focused on building confidence in the study as well as developing a relationship with stakeholders through an informal approach. Independent third party 'guest' articles were sourced and

published on the blog with links to Facebook and Twitter creating a 'communal interest' in common issues and concerns. The legitimacy created out of this approach built a relationship of trust that helped achieve the project's objectives and enhance the reputation of the study.

Feedback and evaluation was very positive, with online results far exceeding expectations. Website traffic doubled the original target of up to 8,000 hits. The Facebook site received 3,500 'likes' exceeding its target of 300 to 500 and generated 695,500 'impressions' (number of times a post is displayed), well surpassing expectations of 20,000 impressions. The online coverage helped to promote the study and drive public submissions, with a total of 247 submissions received exceeding the original target of 200.

FIGURE 2: ROWVILLE RAIL STUDY FACEBOOK PAGE
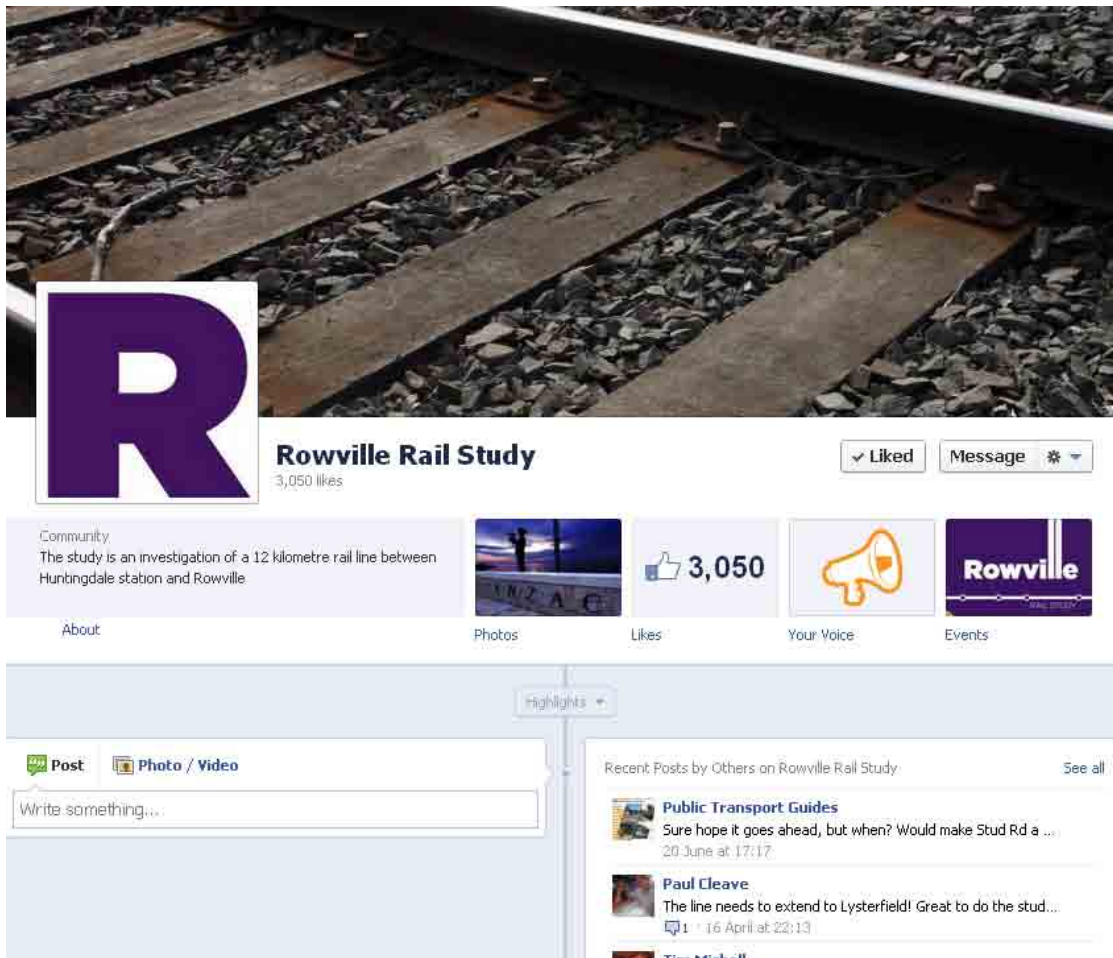
Directly engaging a community
By closely involving the community on a project, an organisation can develop a stronger relationship that ultimately builds community acceptance and approval for a project. As part of the Hinze Dam Alliance, SKM successfully developed this approach for the Hinze Dam Stage 3 project. Hinze Dam is located on Queensland's Gold Coast and is surrounded by world heritage sites. As well as supplying the Gold Coast's potable water supply, Hinze Dam is a major recreational facility with about 300,000 people visiting the dam annually prior to Stage 3 construction.

Considering the quiet and serene nature of the local area, the considerable noise and upheaval associated with such a major construction project in the local community's backyard posed a considerable risk in terms of alienating residents. With visitors and thousands of Gold Coast community members also affected by the closure of the dam during construction, the goal was to meet the legislated deadline by avoiding stakeholder related delays and win community support through a high quality proactive community participation program.

A collaborative community participation program was implemented during construction, with stakeholders contributing to a variety of infrastructure, construction scheduling and conservation strategy decisions.

The campaign allowed the Alliance to develop a very strong relationship with the local community and win their support for the project. Independent surveys found a 90% community acceptance level during planning phase, 87% 18 months into construction and 89% post-construction. In addition, only 3% of all matters raised by stakeholders during construction were complaints. The communication program's success in gaining community support meant the project was not delayed due to community disquiet, extended working hours were allowed and improved facilities based on stakeholder input have provided a lasting legacy. The project has also won several national and international communication and engagement awards.

FIGURE 3: HINZE DAM STAGE 3 COMMUNITY FAMILY FUN DAY

Conclusion

Having a social licence to operate is now a critical factor for successful major projects. Experience shows that a flexible response to operating in a community illustrates organisations as having a 'humanised' reaction rather than a purely commercial or policy position. This represents the organisation as a member of the community and shows it cares and helps to build community acceptance and support for projects affecting that community. An integrated communication approach not only creates an open and transparent relationship with the community and involves them in projects but it also provides the opportunity for an organisation to build and strengthen their reputation.

By adopting an integrated public relations and engagement approach we can prove the value of both forms of communication. On their own, neither public relations nor engagement is enough. They must band together to gain wider recognition and credibility in helping organisations to achieve their brand and commercial legitimacy. Only public relations and engagement combined can provide the level of communication needed to in order for businesses to gain a social licence to operate.

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'I'm a people person': Conceptualising the relevance of emotional social intelligence as a public relations practitioner attribute

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Abstract

Every public relations practitioner, at some point in their career, has had to justify their 'excellent interpersonal skills' either through the process of applying for a new position, pitching for a new client or in the workplace. On the surface, this concept seems to be fairly self-explanatory. After all, aren't all PR practitioners inherently excellent communicators? The phrase 'I am a people person' seems to slip easily off the tongues of many new practitioners with high hopes of making it big in the fast-paced, competitive world of PR. However, once reality kicks in, living up to these lofty, often self-imposed expectations can prove to be difficult, if not impossible. So how do seasoned practitioners develop these so-called soft skills that are considered 'essential' criteria for almost all employers?

Keywords: ESI, mentoring, PR practice

Addressing this question is crucial in an industry where these skills are mandatory for success, especially in an increasingly globalised communication environment. The concept of emotional social intelligence or ESI, in particular the model posited by Bar-On (1997; 2006), may provide a useful framework to identify those particular skills that are required for 'effective communication' as well as point to those traits that make one individual more likely to be an effective communicator than another. This framework could then be applied to tertiary courses and industry professional development programmes thus paying more than just lip-service to these crucial professional skills and in this context, the process of peer mentoring provides a useful framework for operationalising ESI.

ESI, as described by Bar-On (2006) is a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands, and consists of several factors:
  (a) The ability to recognize, understand and express emotions and feelings.
  (b) The ability to understand how others feel and relate with them.
  (c) The ability to manage and control emotions.
  (d) The ability to manage change, adapt and solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature.
  (e) The ability to generate positive affect and be self-motivated.

Although professionals are expected to be able to identify and understand their performance in relation to the first three, the last two factors closely align to those traits that employers find so attractive in communications practitioners including the ability to work autonomously but also as a team player; the ability to be adaptable and changeable at the same time as being reliable and dependable; the ability to lead and be led simultaneously; and most importantly the ability to effect positive change, with little negative disruption. These implicit skills take time to develop over the course of a career but inevitably the practitioner may require mentoring at some point in order to understand what role they may play in the context of career development and progression.

The public relations industry in Australia, and internationally, represented by organisations, consultancies, sole traders, industry peak bodies and tertiary institutions, has embraced peer mentoring as a method for developing emerging as well as experienced practitioners, who may be working as freelancers and women in particular (Gaggioli, 2011). This tested channel of professional development can prove successful if the programme identifies the main areas for development, outside of hard technical skill building such as writing

and public speaking, and provides a methodology for the mentor. However, without a robust framework for identifying what skills the mentee already has and what are those that need to be addressed, over and above what they can identify themselves, the relationship can only go so far.

Mentoring, according to Zachary (2005, p.3) is "a reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship between two (or more) individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability for helping a mentee work towards achievement of clear and mutually defined career goals" and thus is a good method for developing a talent pool within an organisation and more ambitiously, a whole industry. Although mentoring programmes are already common practice for peak bodies, such as the Public Relations Institute of Australia, the efficacy of such programmes relies heavily on the ability of the individual mentor to 'impart their wisdom' through perceived well developed interpersonal communication skills including ESI. Mentors are required to decide for themselves what they think their charge needs to do to 'improve and develop' and in this, the success of the relationship can often be hampered due to personal rather than professional perceptions of the purpose of mentoring and the meaning of ESI.

On the other hand, for some people, this form of mentoring may be more than adequate, such as those in their mid to late careers where the value in the relationship lies in the perceived access to the mentor's network of colleagues, clients and other contacts. However, for early (including students) to mid career practitioners, mentoring is a way to improve their skills and self reflect through third party feedback and counselling from an 'older and wiser' industry peer. Being able to look into a career crystal ball, in the guise of an experienced practitioner, is an exciting proposition and the challenge is to ensure that the mentee's idealistic expectations can be tamed though a formal, standardised process that meets the needs of both parties. In this I contend that mentoring to develop ESI, as a means of nurturing career-oriented personal maturity, can only really be done through a supported structure, based on a tested model for identifying ESI traits before developing personalised programmes. This should start in tertiary education and continue through to ongoing industry-sponsored professional development thus encouraging both educators and practitioners to develop upcoming talent together rather than separately, as is the case today.

This contention arose from research undertaken in 2011 when the Public Relations programme at Murdoch University was recruited to take part in an Australian Learning and Teaching Council funded project entitled *'Internationalisation of the Curriculum in Action'* led by Associate Professor Betty Leaske (University of South Australia). The research aimed to investigate the curricular implications of transnational public relations education through research into perceptions of employers of public relations graduates in two cities, Singapore and Perth, towards intercultural competence (Fitch and Desai, 2011). Several themes, related to the professional and personal traits of graduate public relations practitioners, arose from the analysis including but not limited to personal attributes, knowledge and skills related to specific cultures, and professional knowledge and industry practices.

Several respondents reported the concept of ESI as an important element of these themes, underpinning overall communication success. However, it was not described as an interpersonal skill, rather an implicit trait expected of a practitioner in the field. This was not surprising and as educators, we know from experience that most students who are attracted to the 'bright' lights of the professional communications industries have innate personal qualities that lend themselves to high emotional intelligence, if nurtured and developed throughout university, particularly from their first year of study and that high ESI, represented by traits such as creativity, curiosity, adaptability and empathy (Bar-On, 1997) is essential for the success of the student and early career practitioner in all communication interactions, regardless of the setting.

What is unclear is how to create sustainable and effective opportunities for continuous learning to aid practitioners to self reflect on their personal qualities and develop them for the benefit of their ongoing careers and for early career practitioners, helping them to get their proverbial 'foot in the door'. The question is 'What are the specific inherent ESI traits that typify high performing communications professionals and how do we identify and scaffold them into structured mentoring programmes?' Research and evaluation of current methodologies and experiences in the Australian PR industry, in comparison to those of other disciplines such as marketing and management, could be useful in developing a robust model.

Drawing on the results from the aforementioned project, this presentation will analyse and discuss the relevance of ESI as a useful concept for understanding and nurturing skills such as creativity, curiosity, adaptability and empathy in student and emerging practitioner groups. The concept of peer mentoring will be analysed to help explain how ESI might be researched further to develop a better understanding of the roles that interpersonal skills play in individual communication success in the context of public relations practice in Australia.

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Online dialogue? Engaging stakeholders on a public health issue through collaborative storybuilding on the Internet

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Introduction

The sophistication of new communication technologies continues to grow, and allied industries such as marketing, advertising and journalism are trying to keep pace. But what about public relations? How should the field evolve to take advantage of the unprecedented access to communities on the Internet, which in the past would have been too remote, expensive or marginalised to communicate with? Social media challenges the way public relations is conceptualised, approached and practised. However, while there is much discussion about the increase in interactivity, and mutual exchange between organisations and stakeholders, there is little hard evidence to support the view that communication via online channels is increasingly dialogic or collaborative (Pieczka, 2011).

With a persistent emphasis on the normative approach to public relations, that of the organisation working to establish mutually beneficial relationships with publics (Grunig and Dozier, 1992; Grunig, Grunig and Dozier, 2002), rather than a critical approach, in which the 'public' is considered central to the success of such relationships, not as a receiver of carefully conceived messages (Surma 2006), the dominant paradigm is not conducive to understanding the nature of relationships and dialogue in the online public sphere. However, websites and social media do present real and accessible platforms for those organisations determined to develop and extend authentic and reciprocal relationships with stakeholders, with the Internet providing a platform for large-scale communication activities and a testing ground for online engagement.

We want to illuminate and illustrate this critical approach in public relations by conceiving of the organisation as establishing and developing a community through an ongoing process of what we have coined storybuilding. Importantly, this term suggests the way in which the most effective public relations communications are not composed of discrete 'messages' 'delivered' by one entity to another but, rather that such communicative processes embed, and are embedded in, the stories that give our lives meaning (and see Petraglia, 2007), and that enable our relationships to be reciprocal. Moreover, this approach both highlights the significance of narrative in constituting, shaping and negotiating human experience, and it pays attention to the connections between both the agency and the interdependence of community members and the organisation involved—that is, their mutuality.

The Research Project

This has been one of the main research areas for the Australian Asbestos Network website, a four year National Health and Medical Research Council grant project aiming to determine the methods by which to engage the Australian community on the issue of Asbestos-related diseases. With its history steeped in controversy punctuated by fear, sadness and anger, the story of asbestos in Australia is being told through the experiences of those who suffered during the first two waves of illness; those who worked in the mines and mills, and in manufacturing; and today, by those falling victim to the third wave caused by renovation of homes and workplaces built before the early 1980s.

Through research into the role of harnessing both journalistic storytelling and public relations storybuilding as means of social engagement, the project team has attempted to address its research questions by telling the

history of asbestos and then engaging with key community opinion leaders and government and policy makers to further develop, collaboratively, this compelling story or, more accurately, set of stories. Through this, the project aims to enlist the online and offline community to contribute actively, through articulating their own narratives, in mobilising a change in attitudes towards unnecessary risk-taking in the group most at risk of future illnesses—the third wave. By attempting to connect diverse groups of people with their individual past and present experiences of asbestos, the stories themselves serve to forge the community rather than it being built (or assumed as given) as a consequence of a targeted campaign. Thus the website becomes pivotal to the activity of community storybuilding. In this way too, the community emerges from the storytellers on the website, the offline stakeholder groups and the members of Facebook and Twitter who have chosen to follow both the AAN, the AAN avatar called The Renovator and other stakeholder groups represented in social media.

It is important to note that the concept of 'organisation' in this project is also unique in that the AAN (as a quasi organisation) was created from a unique collaboration of medical, public health, media and social science researchers, who developed the website as a consequence of the need to tell stories to draw community attention to the issue. Thus the idea of community was developed from the inside out. The uniqueness of this approach is marked by the fact that it does not reproduce the conventional scenario in which a public health communicator is charged with responsibility for building and communicating messages, thinly disguised as stories, on behalf of the organization, designed to resonate with stakeholders. Instead, the knowledge, expertise, experience and the emotion of different individuals and groups comprising the emergent community, including the organisation itself, are variously brought to bear on the ongoing and collaborative development of stories, which may be multilayered, discontinuous and diverse.

Preliminary findings

In interviews and a focus group with community members, drawn from a snowball sample of people with direct professional or personal experience with asbestos and related illnesses, the Asbestos Stories section of the website was indicated as one of the most important areas for engaging website users. Respondents indicated that the website was unique due to the personal and subjective nature of the stories. They suggested that while the website was extensive in coverage of important public health and medical information, the stories compelled them to read and respond to sections they otherwise would not have sought out through an internet search, such as Asbestos History and Project News. The corresponding website statistics bear this out. Of the over 16,000 unique visitors (November 2010-April 2012), 93% had landed on Asbestos Stories and then travelled to over 100 other sections and back again to the same point. Evidently, the section acts as a central interaction node.

Focus group respondents indicated that more stories reflecting current asbestos exposure in the renovation sector would be beneficial, especially from those people in the 25-50 age bracket (representing the third wave), a point that is mirrored in the number of 'likes' on both the AAN Facebook page, where the content reflects stories from the website related to DIY renovation, illness and current news and the Renovator Facebook page, which is dedicated solely to stories of home renovation and methods to avoid exposure. The Facebook platform has therefore been useful in encouraging interaction with the website, as well as contributions from members of the community. However, to date, the website itself appears to be the key to developing a communicative community both online and offline, not the other way around. This is interesting as a key research hypothesis to date has been the opposite—that social media would be the community builder. Social media has instead acted as a barometer of community sentiment, with various levels of engagement over several pages/feeds, including those run by other groups. For the AAN, social media has provided an editorial lens by which to gauge the types of material that people are most likely to engage with. This is very different to the offline experience, where the website platform, rather than social media, was reported by the project's community members as central to their experience with the content, especially the stories. We are yet to determine, however, which platform is the initiator of storybuilding and which is the enabler.

These preliminary findings indicate that the nature of storytelling has led to a more complex experience with the website for some community members. In this presentation, we explore these findings in more detail, looking at the ways in which stakeholders engage and identify with the AAN website and social media campaign. We will posit that that the genre of narrative (conceived as collaborative storybuilding rather than monologic storytelling), as well as discourses centred on relationships are pivotal to engaging and developing stakeholder dialogue in public relations activities online and offline. Finally, we tease out the transformative, dialogic potential of this public relations approach for both community and organisation.

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Communicating CSR activities: A rhetorical perspective

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Introduction

The last 15 years have seen an increase in the production of CSR reports (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Bebbington, Larringa, & Moneva, 2008), both in terms of the number of organisations making disclosures and also in terms of the volume of information being published (Deegan, Rankin, & Tobin, 2002), however, this has also resulted in calls for greater transparency (Chen & Bouvain, 2009). This issue of transparency is a considerable issue in relation to CSR communication, given the rise in what scholars term the 'Catch 22 of CSR communication' (Burchell & Cook, 2008; Morsing, Schultz, & Nielsen, 2008). This refers to that fact that although there is an increased expectation for organisations to disclose information (Dawkins & Fraas, 2008; Morsing et al., 2008; Nielsen & Thomsen, 2007), stakeholders can often be highly sceptical of those organisation seen to be communicating their CSR practices (Morsing et al., 2008; Tixier, 2003).

Hence, the challenge for both scholars and practitioners is to create strategies for effective CSR communication that will minimize scepticism, whilst still continuing to convey the intrinsic motives behind organisations' CSR practices (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010; Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010). Given there is very little research to assist organisations and managers in how to approach the complexity of CSR communication (Morsing & Schultz, 2006), and that calls have been made to address the "how" (Maon, Lindgreen, & Swaen, 2010, p. 21) of CSR communication, a number of scholars are now focusing their attention on developing strategies for effective CSR communication. As a result, CSR research has begun to shift from understanding 'why' and 'what' to 'how' best to adopt strategies and practices that support CSR decisions within organisations (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Maon et al., 2010; Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010).

According to Ihlen (2011), rhetoric is a useful starting point for those that wish to charter the terrain of textual CSR strategies, and can aid in developing an understanding as to how organisations communicate about CSR in the way that they do. To date however, the research that has linked CSR communication and rhetoric has been limited to the study of ethos, and has not considered how claims about CSR practices are supported by ethos, logos, and/or pathos (Ihlen, 2011).

Research findings

As such, this research considered the CSR communication performed by nine different organisations across three industries – banking, consumer goods, and energy – and evaluates the different rhetorical techniques – including ethos, logos, and pathos – used in relation to the organisations' CSR activities.

While this research was limited to CSR reports, this study found that CSR communication is an increasingly dynamic and complex area, with organisations having to negotiate the difficult task of responding to multiple stakeholders, often with varying requirements, within the one document. Indeed, while it has been argued that the intended audiences for CSR communication are generally expert audiences, which in turn allows the organisation to communicate indirectly with the public (Morsing et al., 2008), increasingly, we are seeing organisations using CSR reports as a forum to communicate with regulators, shareholders, customers, employees, NGOs, and as a means to illustrate that they are complying with professional guidelines. For this reason, the rhetoric used in CSR reports is considerably varied as a result of the organisation trying to rationalise and justify that it is meeting the needs of various stakeholders.

In conducting this research, it was found that while the organisations did use their CSR reports to communicate to a range of stakeholders, much of the report was devoted to trying to build the organisation's credibility in the eyes of its shareholders, customers, and employees, with the occasional mention that they were also conforming to the requirements of regulators and professional guidelines that they had voluntarily adopted. As such, although this research did consider the reports from a number of different industries, it found that the organisations in these industries used similar rhetorical devices to help rationalise and justify their CSR activities.

In all cases, it was found that the organisations utilised predominately logos throughout their reports, regardless of why the activity was performed, and who the communication was aimed at. Typically, the reports followed that format of the organisation presenting a claim about what they had done in relation to a certain CSR activity, and then backing this claim up with evidence and examples to illustrate how they had performed this activity and the results that had been achieved. In saying this, differences were generally noted in how the organisations used rhetoric to rationalise and justify their evidence and examples. Typically, this depended on the types of stakeholders to which the organisation was trying to appeal to.

The results showed that where the activity was conducted as a result of specific government legislation, such as the reporting on greenhouse gas emissions, the organisations tended to use technical language, such as jargon, statistics and data. Here, the language relied heavily on logos, and was straight to the point, with very little argumentation used to try to rationalise or justify the results. Furthermore, the organisations would often signal that they were required to communicate about their results as a requirement of legislation, which in itself, served as a means to build their credibility with other stakeholders.

Where the report was aimed predominately at shareholders, which was the case for two of the organisations considered in this study (one being from the energy industry and the other from the consumer goods industry); the language also relied heavily on logos. What the results tended to show was that even though the organisation signalled that it responded to the needs of a variety of stakeholders, including customers and employees, it used logos to rationalise and justify why it was performing an activity in terms of the impact that activity would have on its bottom line. Hence, the language tended to be full of jargon, and remained quite technical.

While two of the reports relied heavily on justifying activities back to the value for shareholders, the majority of the reports used language which tried to build the credibility of the organisation and present it as a 'moral' company, who readily listened and responded to the needs of its local communities, customers, and employees. To do this, the organisations utilised ethos as a supporting device alongside logos, with techniques such as similitude, ingratiation, expertise, and self-criticism. Of these strategies, the predominate strategies the organisations used was similitude, which is where the organisation used pronouns to try to portray similarities between itself and the audience. Around issues of particular contention, such as health and safety, human rights, and community investment, the organisation would also try to build its credibility by referring third party frameworks and guidelines, to show that it was acting in line with norms.

Interestingly, pathos, which is centred on emotive appeals, was not used to a great extent by the organisations. In fact, if it was used, it was generally in the form of a narrative case study to assist in illustrating what the organisation had done. It is worth noting however, that in all three industries, at least one organisation utilised a narrative case study to further illustrate a CSR practice. Typically, this was in relation to the communication of community investment activities.

Conclusion

On a final note, while this study provided insights into the rhetorical devices used in relation to specific CSR activities in an attempt to show what some of the leading Australian organisations in CSR are doing, and how communication can be used to rationalise and justify practices; it did find that in most cases, organisations are

not conveying the intrinsic motives behind engaging in CSR practices. This research revealed that much, if not all, of what is being performed under the banner of CSR actually stems from professional guidelines, such as the GRI, and government legislation. Unfortunately, this is rarely mentioned by organisations, particularly the organisations included in this study, which are considered to be amongst the leaders in CSR. Instead, they chose to utilise language in an attempt to portray that they are 'moral' organisations who respond to the needs and wants of their stakeholders. As such, while this study offers insights into how rhetorical devices can be used to rationalise and justify CSR activities based on what organisations are currently doing, organisations will continue to face scepticism from members of the public if they fail to reveal the true intentions and motivations behind the adoption of certain CSR activities.

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Disconnections? Corporate social responsibility and employee commitment in India

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Abstract

This study explored perceptions about linkages between awareness of socially responsible practices of corporations and employee commitment. Results, based on interviews with 19 business leaders and senior executives of corporations and a survey with employees (N=244) of two large corporations in India, revealed that awareness of CSR practices is positively related with employee commitment. However, while business leaders and senior executives perceived strong linkages between demonstrating corporate responsibility to external constituencies and enhanced employee commitment, employees clearly fore-grounded legal and ethical dimensions of CSR in strengthening their commitment to the organization. Implications for practice and theory are discussed.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, Employee commitment, Public relations, CSR in India

Introduction

The strategic approach to corporate social responsibility (CSR) asserts that being socially responsible can bring back benefits to organizations and their publics (Chaudhri & Wang, 2007; Hooghiemstra, 2000; Kotler & Lee, 2005). However, most research within the rubric of strategic CSR has focused mostly on the customer stakeholder (e.g., David, Kline & Dai, 2005; Wigley, 2008). In order to create a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of CSR on multiple publics, it is important to study the impact of CSR on the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of other stakeholders as well. One of the most important organizational publics is the employee stakeholder group. However, even though employees have been acknowledged as a vital stakeholder group (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Kennan & Hazleton, 2006), hardly any research has been carried out on the effects of CSR on this group and scholars have called for more research (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, & Ganapathi, 2007; May, 2011). In response to that call, this study focuses on the employee stakeholder group, both from the perspective of managers and employees.

Further, most of the extant research on CSR has been conducted within Euro-American contexts of practice, foregrounding the ethnocentricity that characterizes much of the research in public relations (Sriramesh, 2008; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009). In order to generate greater awareness of other contexts of practice, this study was situated in a non-Euro-American context, specifically India. The choice of India as the context of study was motivated by the following factors. First, India is one of the fastest growing and important emerging economies in the world. Second, the gains from national economic growth, led largely by corporations have been unevenly distributed, exacerbating existing social disparities (www.eiu.com, India country forecast, 2010). Third, India has had a long, unbroken commercial tradition, a long history of social responsibility demonstrated by commercial communities, and a cultural ethos and tradition of charity and giving (Mitra, 2007; Sundar, 2000). The above factors combine to make India a productive context to study the phenomenon of CSR.

Accordingly, this study explored perceptions about the linkages between awareness of socially responsible practices of corporations and employee commitment among business leaders and senior executives (19) of corporations that are known to be socially responsible and employees (244) of two large corporations in India.

This study adopted Carroll's (1979) definition of CSR according to which "the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of

organizations at a given point in time" (p. 500). Commitment was defined as the extent to which relating parties believe and feel that the relationship is worth expending energy on to maintain and promote (Grunig & Huang, 2000). Two research questions were posited to guide the direction of the study:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of senior executives regarding the benefits of engaging with CSR, specifically with reference to employee commitment?

RQ2. How does employees' perceptions of their organizations' practice of CSR influence their commitment to their organizations?

Method

This study employed two main methods of data collection - elite, semi-structured interviews and web-based, self-administered surveys. The sampling frame selected was the Standard & Poor India ESG Index, a list of 50 companies selected from the first 500 Indian companies by total market capitalization listed on the National Stock Exchange of India Ltd. (NSE) based on a company's environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices.

To answer the first research question, in-depth conversations were conducted with 19 senior executives representing 16 corporations from the sampling frame. Participants included executive presidents, vice presidents, chief executive officers, chief operating officers and directors who were either solely responsible for CSR or held additional responsibility for CSR.

To answer the second research question, a self-administered survey was given out to employees of two large organizations. In order to keep the effects of industry sector under control, the study examined one industry in the service sector. The information technology sector was chosen because it has been at the vanguard of India's economic growth after economic liberalization and employs a large number of people (www.eiu.com, India Country Profile, 2008).

In the first organization, the survey was sent out to around 500 employees from whom 114 usable responses (response rate of 22.8%) were returned. In the second organization, the survey was mailed to around 800 employees; 130 usable responses (response rate of 16.25%) were returned. The overall sample size for the industry was 244. The majority (N=117, 48%) of respondents were male while 78 (32%) were female, and the rest did not identify gender. The majority (N=159, 65.2%) of respondents were in the 20-30 years age range and 52.5% of the sample (N=128) had 1-5 years of experience with their current organization.

To measure the construct of CSR, this study adapted the instrument developed by Maignan and Ferrell (2000) because the instrument is based on one of the most widely accepted definitions of CSR, Carroll's (1979, 1991) theoretical conceptualization of CSR which has four dimensions -- discretionary, ethical, legal and economic. Further, this instrument was created specifically for employees and included questions such as: "This company seeks to comply with all laws regulating hiring and employee benefits." To measure the construct of employee commitment, this study chose the commitment–related questions of Hon and Grunig's (1999) instrument to measure the relational outcomes of commitment, satisfaction, control mutuality and trust.

Results

A majority of interviewees (75-89%) from the service sector shared that one of the key drivers for corporations to engage in socially responsible behavior was to engage employees and to strengthen the "feel-good" factor between employees and their organization. For instance, a senior CSR executive in a multinational company said:

If we are talking about a program like [name of the program] which is really very remote and is away from any of our locations, then, the only benefit to the organization per se is in making its employees

feel good about the company that they are working for. Because when we put this up on our intranet website a lot of employees came up and commented that we are so happy to be part of an organization that has a heart and is thinking beyond its own profitability and direct benefits to itself, that is thinking of society.

Further, participants opined that employees feel proud of an organization that is socially responsible and that employees find their organization's CSR programs an effective channel to fulfill their personal sense of social responsibility. To illustrate, a senior executive in charge of CSR spoke about employee volunteering:

In many organizations there are people you know who want an opportunity, but it's not that easy to get an opportunity to actually be involved in social work. So I mean, all said and done, you have other things that you are doing in your life; you are not a dedicated full time social worker. So when you are not that, then to have an opportunity is not that easy. So in a way, the employees are also happy that the company is giving them that opportunity.

Thus, participants narrated that engaging in CSR brings back returns in terms of better bonding with employees. It is interesting to note that participants appeared to equate CSR with social work/service, clearly foregrounding discretionary aspects of CSR over ethical, legal or economic dimensions. For instance, a senior executive articulated this perspective:

Very clearly, issues like corporate governance and taking care of employees and all these internal matters, are part of our, you know, organizational responsibility. We don't believe it is CSR at all. We are clear that CSR involves giving back to something outside the company and it should be, by and large, not driven and motivated by profits.

However, results from the regression analysis of data gathered from employees revealed that while all the four dimensions of CSR are significantly and positively related to employee commitment, F-change was the greatest when legal CSR ($\beta = .763$, $p \leq .001$, Adj.$R^2 = .549$, F change $= 219.165$, $p \leq .001$) was added onto the baseline model followed by ethical ($\beta = .743$, $p \leq .001$, Adj.$R^2 = .544$, F change $= 214.228$, $p \leq .001$), discretionary ($\beta = .747$, $p \leq .001$, Adj. $R^2 = .537$, F change $= 208.655$, $p < .001$) and economic CSR ($\beta = .635$, $p \leq .001$, Adj.$R^2 = .398$, F change $= 118.026$, $p \leq .001$). These results suggest that among these four dimensions, legal CSR appears to be the most important, followed by ethical, discretionary and, finally, economic CSR. This finding is at odds with the insights derived from the qualitative interviews where senior executives explicitly foregrounded the importance of the discretionary dimension of CSR over the remaining three.

Discussion

Findings revealed that both senior executives and employees appeared to perceive positive relationships between the CSR practices of the organization and employee commitment. However, more importantly, findings revealed a disconnection between senior executives' and employees' perceptions of the contribution of different dimensions of CSR in strengthening relationships with employees. While business leaders and senior executives perceived strong linkages between demonstrating corporate responsibility to external constituencies and enhanced employee commitment, employees clearly fore-grounded the legal and ethical dimensions of CSR in strengthening their commitment to the organization.

This finding supports an emerging stream of research that argues that the employee stakeholder group values ethical and legal dimensions over societal or philanthropic dimensions of corporate social responsibility in engendering relationship outcomes such as employee commitment and/or satisfaction (Dhanesh, 2012; Peterson, 2004; Valentine & Fleischman, 2008). It also appears to empirically validate May's (2008; 2011) call for focusing attention on the ethical engagement of employees within the paradigm of strategic CSR. Based on the findings, this study concludes that while being focussed on the social service aspect of CSR is

laudable, organizations might do well to focus on legal and ethical matters before stepping out to remedy issues external to the organization. Essentially, it is about putting your house in order before turning to fix problems in the world.

This study is significant for the following reasons. First, this research augments the existing body of knowledge on linkages between CSR practice and employee commitment. Second, this study highlights the perspective of employees, one of the most important but under-researched organizational stakeholder groups in CSR research. Third, though research of this nature has been carried out previously in North American and European contexts, this is one of the first studies to examine associations between awareness of CSR practices and employee commitment in the context of an emerging Asian economy, specifically India. Finally, from the perspective of practice, this study produces empirical evidence for practitioners of domestic and multinational companies of the influences of different dimensions of CSR on employee commitment in India that can inform CSR policy-making, planning, practice and communication.

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Corporate communication and PR practice in South East Asia: Practitioner views and experiences on cultural understanding and PR education matters

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Abstract

The paper presents some results of 13 in-depth interviews conducted during 2011-2012 across six member countries of ASEAN, following on from an online survey sent to more than 100 practitioners in the region. Topics addressed in this paper are: (1) how well local cultural considerations are understood in the global profession, and vice versa; (2) particularly 'enlightening' cultural experiences of practitioners; and (3) local attitudes toward formal "international style" PR education. Interviewees in general tend toward views that relevant cultural considerations are not always well enough understood; that individual anecdotal experiences are often able to shed valuable light on important local considerations; and that formal PR education is not universally held in high regard..

Background

An immense amount has been written in the past half century and beyond on matters of communication theory and practice, broader contextual studies of critical and cultural theory, and most recently on matters concerning globalisation and regional and local identities as seen from economic, political, sociological and anthropological perspectives.

In seeking to refine and relate all of this work down to the relevance it may have to the specific fields of public relations and corporate communication, it is noteworthy that amongst all the analysis and commentary about mass communication, there has been, perhaps surprisingly, little said about communication and culture **_from the perspective of those people who themselves work as professional communicators_**, in fields like public relations and corporate communication (PRCC).

Considerations about communication, culture, power, self identity, symbolic meanings, and personal and group orientation can all be seen to be as relevant to South East Asia as any other part of the world, and to PRCC practitioners in these countries, and are perhaps especially worthy of study at present given that nations within this region are part of what is widely regarded to be the most rapidly developing economic region in the world, one of its most diverse and populous, and one which has self-declared intentions to parallel the historic development of the 'Euro-zone' (The Economist, 6 February 2010).

While it might be said that most PRCC practitioners researched for this and other studies indicate little evidence of an attachment to communication theories, or social scientific theory of any kind, some small beginnings **_have_** been made in examining the relationship between the actual practice of public relations and intercultural communication, by Grunig et al (1995), and the specific relationships in Asian cultural settings (Sriramesh 2004), and the beginnings of an attempt made to develop improved 'global navigation' of international corporate communications practice by Sievert and Porter, drawing on the work of several other researchers in the first years of the twenty-first century (Sievert and Porter 2009).

The opportunity exists to take this work further in the South East Asian context, at a time of intense activity by industry practitioners in the region, extremely rapid change in communication technologies and practices,

and intense social and political flux – and particularly to seek to discover what insights PRCC practitioners themselves can offer about this from their own worldviews. The research study upon which this paper is based seeks to do that.

The study

Following on from an initial quantitative survey distributed to around 100 practitioners across six countries of South East Asia (some initial findings of which were reported by this author in June 2011 at the Corporate Communication International conference at Baruch College, City University of New York), the researcher conducted a total of 13 semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews, across six ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) nations selected for inclusion in this study. These interviews were conducted in the respective locations (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) between February and December 2011.

Interviewees were purposively identified (as explained fully in the study) to provide a diverse mixture of: nationals and expatriates, younger practitioners and highly experienced practitioners, consultancy based and in-house, and female and male[3]. Interviewees were asked a series of 32 questions in total, and in most cases all were answered, with varying degrees of detail and interpretation.

Given that the findings of all these interviews run to around 40,000 words, for the purposes of this paper the responses to only three of these questions are outlined. [4]

This paper

The responses summarised in this paper for the World PR Forum in Melbourne, Australia, relate to: (1) how well local cultural considerations are understood in the global profession, as well as global considerations understood at the local level; (2) any 'enlightening' experiences of practitioners in regard to cultural differences or similarities encountered during the course of their work; and (3) regional attitudes toward formal PR education.

How well local cultural considerations are understood in the global profession, and how well global issues are understood locally

A number of interviewees comment on what they see as gaps between local and global understandings of cultural distinctions in their profession and the industries in which they work.
Broadly, comments embrace:

- Lack of appreciation in some quarters of the diversity across Asia

- The need for appreciation of cultural diversity issues *within* the populations of specific Asian countries

- The risks of stereotyping

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[3] Interviewee names have been changed in this paper. Real names may be given for some or all at the final report stage, but until approval for this is given from each respondent the author is protecting individual identities.

[4] Responses to three other questions were outlined in June 2012 at the Corporate Communication International Conference at Baruch College, City University of New York. The responses in that paper addressed: (1) the relevance of culture and cultural difference to effective PR and corporate communication practice in South East Asian settings; (2) the effects of globalisation on the world of Asian practitioners; and (3) changes in society and communication behaviours affecting professional practice. Responses to these and 26 other questions are addressed in the full doctoral research report, along with findings from an earlier quantitative survey of practitioners across the region.)

- The need for staffing balance to achieve an effective mix of local and multinational perspectives

- The consequences of extreme cultural insensitivity, insularity or arrogance

- Poor awareness of global practice and ethical practice standards in certain locations

- A rise in the importance of 'localism' within some nations

- An emerging scramble for 'local talent' to guide PR operations in emerging economies

- The growing role of online social media in creating new links and interactions across the region and beyond

'Enlightening' experiences in regard to cultural differences or similarities encountered by practitioners across the region in the course of their work

Most interviewees offer engaging examples and andecdotes about personal experiences which they feel symbolise or offer insights into important aspects of local PRCC practice and expectations.
The anecdotes attracting comment relate to:
- The benefits to be gained in recognising heroes and personal sacrifice

- Ways to influence governments widely seen to be impervious to lobbying

- How to educate multinational clients about differences between local and global brand perceptions

- The precedence of protocol and spectacle over strategic thinking in some instances

- "Neighbourly divides" between apparently similar nations

- The importance of differing logistics in different locations

- When translation is important and when it is not

It can be seen from the anecdotes given about instructive experiences on the job that most of those practitioners who have worked across national borders, or with foreign clients, have been presented with powerful reasons on occasion to consider when differences may or may not matter.

Attitudes toward formal PR education amongst South East Asian practitioners

Interviewees were asked where they consider they have learned most of what they know about PRCC practice – and whether or not this has included any formal PR or communications education.
Respondents tend toward somewhat dismissive views of formal PR education, either based on their own experience, or their impression of it amongst others. Some, however, give more mixed and nuanced views, stressing the value to be gained by a mixing of professional backgrounds and perspectives. Some outline distinctive and illuminating personal histories that have led them to similar destinations from very different directions.

Amongst the few who demonstrate much knowledge or faith in formal PR or communication studies, there is a level of disillusionment about how well such thinking is applied in practice within local industries.

Greater credit is generally given to the value of what has been learned directly in the workforce, both inside and outside the PRCC profession, even amongst those who have enjoyed some level of formal PRCC or allied

professional communication grounding in fields like journalism or marketing. Amongst those both with and without formal communication foundations, direct 'experiential' learning is seen to trump any academic exposure.

Amongst those interviewees who have experienced some formal studies of PR or corporate/organisational communications, consideration was then given to the further question of what differences they have found between academic theory and the practical realities in their working lives. Most report disparities between the theory and practice, but express varying levels of concern about that.

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Lap dancing teachers: A case study
Defending reputation in a global information age

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Abstract

In 2010, two Winnipeg teachers were participating in a school pep rally. Their fervour was captured on a student's cell phone and posted on YouTube. Dubbed the "Lap dancing teachers," their story became an international sensation and cost two young teachers their jobs. If there wasn't YouTube, would these two teachers still be working? This case study examines the blurring of traditional communication boundaries resulting from the expansion of social media by referring to the "lap dancing teachers" where professional reputation was instantly and irreparably damaged through social media.

Keywords: Lap dancing teachers, reputation management, social media

Setting

Winnipeg is the capital and largest city in the province of Manitoba and the eighth largest city in Canada. It is located near the geographic centre of North America. With close to 700,000 inhabitants it is a cosmopolitan city with vibrant ethnic communities. Despite frigid winter temperatures that can reach -40C, Winnipeg has been crowned the Slurpee capital of the world for 12 straight years. Although not in the boondocks, Winnipeg has been the butt of numerous jokes in TV shows like The Simpsons. When a character says, "We're going back to Winnipeg!" it's a funny sounding word that delivers the punch line.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) is the union for 15,000 public school teachers in the province. It has been the voice for Manitoba teachers for 93 years.

Uh-oh moment

It was cold on Tuesday, February 23, 2010, on what was supposed to be a good news day. MTS was hosting a photo op at the city's food bank. Dozens of school children were sorting the tons of food they had collected. There were TV cameras; kids and teachers were posing for pictures and doing interviews. This is the kind of PR event that takes months of planning and provides the soft and fuzzy visuals evening TV news broadcasts' crave.

All PR nightmares start with the "uh-oh" moment. That day ours began at the food bank with a cell phone call received while the kids were hamming it up for the cameras. MTS doesn't often receive a call from "The National". We did that day. "The National" is the nightly national news broadcast of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. We were quite sure they weren't calling about the food drive. A video had been posted on Facebook; the question was, "Had we seen it?". It featured two teachers at a school pep rally apparently simulating a lap dance.

The glare of publicity

It sounds unbelievable now, but at the time we knew of only one person at MTS with a Facebook account, so staff gathered around his computer to watch the video. We were stunned when we viewed it. Two Winnipeg teachers were participating in a dance contest at school pep rally. Their "dance" was captured on a student's

cell phone and had been posted online for everyone to see.

That Tuesday evening, to an audience of millions "The National" news anchor began the piece by saying, "High school is often the place where boundaries are pushed to the limit, but not usually by the teachers. So there's a lot of outrage in Winnipeg over a performance by high school staff that might fail a decency test."[5]

The next day the video migrated to YouTube. At the start of the day it had 18,000 hits, by the afternoon it had grown to 40,000. To protect our teachers, the immediate thought was, "How do we get this off?" Through the principal of the school where the incident took place an attempt was made to get the student who posted the video to remove it. It was unsuccessful.

By Thursday the YouTube video had more than 500,000 hits. People in Australia and Europe were reading about the "scandalous" behaviour of these teachers. After four days, there were more than 1.5 million hits. Viewers were shocked and posted their reactions online by the thousands.

Challenges and how they were met

This story didn't have legs -- it had tentacles. It was felt by some at MTS that removing the video would kill the story. Through networking, Google's Vice President of global communications and public policy was contacted for advice on how to get the video removed. This was a drawn-out process that eventually worked, but did not solve the problem. Soon another video, with a closer view of the two teachers, emerged. Shortly after, a third video surfaced of the female teacher with suggestive pictures from her Facebook page. It was impossible to staunch the flow of uploaded videos.

Two days after the pep rally, the two teachers were suspended by the school board that employed them. After the story broke, a rogue school trustee with that school board told every media outlet that would listen that the two teachers should be let go. He even made an appearance on CNN Headline News criticizing the teachers' behaviour. He was the only "official" commenting on the story, although he wasn't commenting in any official capacity or with any inside knowledge.

Meanwhile, MTS was wavering on whether to respond to media inquiries with more than a "no comment". MTS did not want to appear to be rendering judgment on the teachers' behaviour. As the union for all public school teachers in the province, there is legal a duty of fair representation. Every teacher is entitled to due process. We had staff advocating for these two teachers with the school board. Did we need to have someone advocating for them in the media?

While the rogue school trustee was delighted to be the poster child for outraged parents and taxpayers, did the MTS president want to be the face of teachers behaving badly? The answer was no. The president did comment to the media on the phone in support of every teacher's right to representation by their union, but did not appear on camera on this issue. Message lines were tightly scripted. Telephone calls were kept brief so radio clips and newspaper quotes were tight. TV generally did not use the audio clips.

Despite our low-key approach responding to the media, MTS did receive several emails from teachers who felt that union money must not be used to defend these teachers. Naturally, the number of teachers who wrote in support was fewer.

After their 15 minutes of fame, the lap dancing teachers quickly became yesterday's story nationally and internationally. However, the fate of these teachers dragged on for weeks. The school board held in-camera meetings and continued to refuse to talk to the media. Almost two months after the raucous pep rally, the school board announced that one teacher had resigned and the second had reached the end of his contract.

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[5]CBC, The National, February 23, 2010

That day the school board chair said "the board would have taken their actions just as seriously had there been no video evidence -- it just wouldn't have been treated as sensationally by the media."[6]

"We have the best teachers in the world here -- two teachers do not set the standard for 3,000 (Winnipeg School Division teachers)," she said. "It's really unfortunate to end up in the news like this." [7]

Lessons learned

The "lap dancing teachers" media spectacle not only wiped out any goodwill generated at the food bank event, but may have gnawed at the excellent reputation of 15,000 public school teachers in the province.

MTS polls the public on their favourability towards Manitoba teachers. Between 2009 and 2011 that favourability dropped. In 2011, slightly fewer than nine out of ten Manitobans (89%) had favourable feelings toward public school teachers, down from a high of 93% in 2009. The proportion of Manitobans who had a very favourable impression dropped six points, from 44% to 38% in 2011. Those who had a somewhat favourable feeling toward teachers increased from 49% to 51%. Those who regard teachers unfavourably increased to 9% from 6%. Three percent did not offer an opinion.[8]

Can this drop be attributed directly to the fallout from the "lap dancing teachers" incident? No. There likely are thousands of other factors also at play. However, for MTS, proactive PR and social media literacy amongst our members became even more necessary. MTS now shows teachers video clips from CNN and other American news outlets where teachers are condemned as a result of Facebook postings. A picture is worth a thousand words in terms of a teacher's reputation.

In the past, teachers, especially in rural communities, were concerned about gossip that started in the grocery store. Now an inadvertent social faux pas can be immediately broadcast through videos, texts, Facebook, blogs and Flickr. Once individual reputation is tarnished it is difficult to restore the sheen. A lapse in judgment that once was isolated and local is now fodder for social media and the 24/7 global news cycle. It can have an enormous effect on the reputation of everyone associated with the offender.

For teachers, much like the clergy, police and doctors, reputation is their currency. And teachers are held to a higher moral standard than many other professions. Their behaviour speaks to their character and perhaps to their suitability as a teacher. Do parents and the public have the right to know? Can we stop the "public" creeping into the "private"?

For a non-profit organization like a teachers' union, success is measured not by the bottom line, but by the rise and fall of the public perception of its members. Good public relations is just as important for organizations that don't have a product or service to sell, or shareholders to protect, but whose mission is to preserve and enhance the reputation of all of its members individually and as a whole.

What are the lessons learned from the 'lap dancing teachers' incident? Because of the Internet this incident will dog these two teachers forever. Not only did they lose their jobs, but as a result of the media attention their chances of ever finding a teaching job again is very slim.

Today, schools administrators think twice about school events with a view to "how it might look" or how might it get "out of hand." Although bystanders at the pep rally were not disciplined in this instance, their failure to report the incident was mentioned by the media.

[6]Churchill's lap-dancing teachers bow out, Winnipeg Free Press, Nick Martin, April 20, 2010
[7] Ibid
[8]A telephone survey of a random sample of 800 Manitobans was conducted between March 22 to April 1, 2011, by Viewpoints Research, on behalf of the Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Recently, school boards in Manitoba have obtained more power from government to control rogue trustees. The publicity about this and other similar cases may have positively influenced teacher behaviour online and off. MTS has provided more member education about the pitfalls of social media.

Conclusion

Five years ago postings on hosted sites such as "Rate my teacher" were The Manitoba Teachers' Society's main social media challenge. Now, parents are beginning to demand that teachers be videotaped all day so their lessons can be reviewed. These growing public expectations are warning signs for all professions who depend on reputation and goodwill for their livelihood that they will increasingly be in the public eye.

Today Manitoba teachers are repeatedly reminded how boundaries can be crossed through social media. How nothing is ever private. Blurring communication boundaries means reputation damaging PR issues can arise from anywhere and from anyone and explode instantly.

Crossing Internal Barriers in Health Communication

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Abstract

This research project explored the impact of a city-wide anti-obesity campaign on key participants over a year (2010-2011). Members of the campaign team and audiences were interviewed and the results triangulated with researcher observations. The research built on Bourdieu's (1977) work on the unconscious nature of practice and the resistance strategies adopted by receivers against uncomfortable messages. As most of the audiences in this campaign were themselves 'gatekeepers' in managing obesity in the city, their responses have wide-ranging implications for health and other campaigns. The evaluation of both campaign senders' and receivers' attitudes is also of wider value.

Keywords: Health Communication; Obesity campaigns; Bourdieu; resistance; depth Evaluation

Background

The research project evaluated a year-long anti-obesity campaign run by Carnegie Weight Management (CWM, now More-Life www.more-life.co.uk), leading campaigners, researchers, educationalists and thought leaders in the field of diet, sport and nutrition. CWM was commissioned to design and deliver an extensive training and awareness programme across a range of information providers and users in the Sheffield (UK) area, including engagement with the health, education and business and voluntary sectors. One hour awareness sessions, three hour core training, three hour enhanced training, workplace, family and public events were delivered over the 2010/11 contract. Events ranged from half or full day workshops with child and family support workers, sports coaches, and other health professionals, to hour-long workplace meetings, parents' sessions at schools and stalls at family-focussed events.

CWM commissioned this research to understand and amend their communication strategy, with particular concern for the internal barriers experienced by health professionals which might inhibit their ability to pass on anti-obesity messages. The rationale was that raising awareness of unconscious barriers in any of the parties would create space for amending those factors which impeded communication.

Researching health communication issues

Berry (2007) groups health communication literature into process, semiotics and cultural theory approaches, which examine, respectively, the dynamics of interpersonal communication, the use of signs and symbols or the development of cultural norms to analyse health issues. This omits the growing use of social theory to examine power in communication around health issues; for example, Adkins and Corus (2009) draw on Bourdieu's sociological critique of power in professions to examine how pharmacists relate to low-literate users, using a combination of observation and interviews to probe the strategies used by all parties to deliver or receive uncomfortable messages. Bourdieu's *habitus* is the means by which society reproduces itself, generating in the individual and collective a set of behaviours, expectations and relations which are not absolutely fixed but which tend to repetition unless consciously examined (Ihlen, 2007). Friedland (2009:889) also observed that Bourdieu's agent is 'retrospectively rational', using sense-making to justify avoiding challenges. Bourdieu's exploration of types of capital, including social and symbolic capital, includes the body as a source of physical capital and the nexus of social world/body relations (Fries, 2009; Reay, 2004).

Research approach and design

Bourdieu's (1977) concepts of practice, *habitus*, capital and field created the overarching framework for the project, particularly his articulation of resistance strategies to unwelcome communication and the hidden assumptions in everyday practice. Data collection involved a combination of 30 hours' observation of events, six in-depth semi-structured interviews with the campaign team and 12 with (volunteer) audience members selected to represent the widest possible range of participants. Open questions were designed to elicit deeper attitudes from the campaigners to audiences and vice versa, including participants' own experience with weight issues. The analysis included outlining the fields of power, from literature and observation; describing the relevant structures from demographic and other data; and investigating the *habitus* of all agents by clustering respondents' comments thematically. The findings presented here focus on the latter element, with respondent comments in italics.

Findings

Communicators' habitus

The CWM approach combined the traditional structure of other anti-obesity campaigns – particularly the use of expert authority –with an awareness of issues concerning power and self-efficacy. The Director - and key driver of the campaign - owned the scientific knowledge, academic awards and the extensive experience of what Bourdieu calls capital. He was also the source of the commitment to empowerment, consciously avoiding the exercise of power over the (relatively) powerless. All team members interviewed shared a deep sense of enthusiasm and commitment to the overall organisational goals, with a deep engagement with people, especially young people, seeking to lose weight. Indeed, the term '*passionate communicator*' emerged several times in interviews with members of the CWM team.

This set of core values was frequently echoed by team members, for example, "*Core message? Be active as much as possible, small changes make big differences, everything in moderation. It's not all weight loss, but healthy life style*". There was remarkable unanimity on these messages, which raises the possibility of 'group think' where reflection and dissension are minimised, even discouraged: "*Members of staff who don't 'get it' don't last*". There was also evidence of a sender-centred orientation, as evidenced in excessive use of slides (often containing errors) and inadequate time for peer-discussion of issues raised. More subtly, unconscious assumptions led to references to meals with 'mum and dad', examples of primarily white diets, and idealised images of children's behaviour in previous generations, suggesting scope for challenging cultural and ethnic assumptions about diet patterns, family arrangements and food consumption.

Respondents' *habitus*

The audience response to CWM events was largely positive and welcomed the central message that large changes can be made through incremental behaviour shifts, with several respondents indicating the impact sessions had made on their professional and personal practices. Interestingly, while most recalled the enthusiasm of presenters, together with a few key points, only a tiny percentage of the information actually offered on the day was retained.

Several interviewees mentioned the routine nature of training they attend or deliver; others mentioned attending *'under orders';* and many mentioned fitting obesity into work targets, reflecting the bureaucratisation of such services: as one respondent noted, "*this used to be done by families*". It is worth reiterating that the health professionals (mostly educated to MA level) were themselves expert communicators in their fields.

One factor that deserves particular attention is the experience of the older, heavier women who appeared to constitute the majority of most audiences. Nine of the twelve interviewees had extensive experience of dealing with weight as a personal issue, as well as giving advice in a professional capacity. Some highlighted their discomfort at this combination of roles, "[the] *difficulties of raising issues with parents if you're overweight"*: *"I know I'm overweight and preaching to others – it doesn't fit comfortably"*. Others in this group deflected the discussion to wider issues, mentioning anorexia, or changing views of weight, *"Could be more about obesity across cultures. ... This is a western-centred approach."* This suggests a *habitus* of low-level unease about providing dietary advice to others while ignoring it themselves leading, potentially, to avoidance of the issue as a whole. Two respondents (interviewed together) stressed this: *"Would like more information about dealing with guilt as trainer"; "What they didn't touch on was – an arena that allowed us to speak personally, about our own vulnerability and concerns"*.

Implications

The presentation of health communication, such as anti-obesity campaigns, involves issues of culture and power. Using Bourdieu's framework enabled a preliminary exploration of these dimensions from both the communicators' and audience perspective, generating valuable insights. This research highlighted the contrast between the CWM campaigning spirit and the mixed motives of audience members, some of whom were interested, others under instruction and attending reluctantly.

The campaigners were found to have undervalued the expertise of their audiences and in particular failed to identify the kind of internal discomfort experienced by overweight health advisors. As this unease led some 'gatekeepers' to avoid mentioning weight to service users even when it was part of their job, the implications for health communicators and professionals generally is considerable.

The research is also of value outside the health field in its critical analysis of both sender and receiver aspects of a communication campaign, raising issues of hidden assumptions and unspoken resistance strategies.

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Divided we Stand: Defying Hegemony in Theory and Practice

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Abstract

The last decade has seen the world becoming increasingly complex. One way of dealing with complexity, according to Schwab (2010a), is to look for certainties or solutions that impose order by simplifying. The authors contend that this is also happening in public relations practice and the academy. They criticise attempts to produce global models which lead to hegemony and argue for maintaining a diversity that reflects reality. They take the cases of the UK and Singapore as respective exemplars where hegemony has succeeded and where it needs to be resisted. They call for a professional and epistemological stand against hegemony.

Keywords: Complexity, Hegemony, Globalisation, Excellence, UK, Singapore

Introduction

In the two years since the last World Public Relations Forum, the world has changed radically. The drivers which underlie the changes of world society today have far surpassed governments' or organizations' ability to cope (Schwab, 2010a). As a consequence, one response, Schwab contends, has been to reduce complexity by searching for new certainties or solutions that simplify by imposing order. In practice this means, according to the authors of this paper, accepting and in some cases enforcing convergence: commonalities and standards that cut across time, space and culture, like global accounting standards, legal practices, and behemoth social media platforms.

In our profession of public relations, this is exampled by moves by global or globally-affiliated agencies and consultancies to standardise and promote their own campaigning principles, and by multinational organisations who are consolidating, for example, their global issues management practices. The Stockholm Accords and the Melbourne Mandate, too can be considered as consolidation and simplification attempts.

Theory development in public relations has gone down a parallel path, by devising convergent models (Sriramesh and Vercic, 2009) and applying them either regionally, as in the European Model of public relations (van Ruler and Vercic, 2002; van Ruler et al., 2004) or world-wide through the theory of generic principles and specific applications (Vercic et al.1996; Grunig, 2009).

A prior question concerns the necessity or desirability of any global model. On the one hand it may help practitioners who work in an increasingly global world to categorise and analyse public relations in multiple contexts and to determine ways of operating that make their working lives simpler. However, convergent models in the profession lead to double-binds for practitioners when global (very often 'Western') norms clash with local ones. Meanwhile, convergent models in theory become irrelevant for practitioners who do not recognize their complex, daily practice in them. This paper challenges the search for global public relations models and calls for a scholarship and a practice that embraces divergence, and resists the temptation to converge, simplify and generalize. It discusses first and in brief, issues around globalisation; second, it looks at the success of hegemony in the UK and the pressures towards it in Singapore; and finally it calls for a professional and epistemological stand against hegemony.

Globalisation

Globalisation is a multifaceted concept. It is a political, economic, technical, and, more importantly for this paper, a deeply cultural phenomenon that "is marked by the complex diffusion of ideas, information, capital

and people across national boundaries, entangling the local and global, deterritorialising and re-territorialising national cultures" (Held, 2000, cited in Pal and Dutta, 2008, p.159). As Ghemawat (2007) points out, the concept of globalisation – and its cruder version of a flat earth – is in itself a hegemonic metaphor that disregards that 'differences still matter'. His data reveal how the process is neither linear, nor all-encompassing and at most deserves to be called semi-globalisation.

In spite of (semi-) globalisation, the 'Excellence Study' has remained the hegemonic "disciplinary matrix, […] probably the only one in public relations" (Botan and Hazleton, 2009, p. 8). For over a decade, its generic principles (Vercic et al., 1996; Grunig, 2009) and specific applications (Sriramesh and Vercic, 2009), have been at the heart of scholarship and debate on a global theory of public relations (Sriramesh, 2009).
 This matrix could be argued as being emic in approach, attempting to take themes and constructs developed in one culture (largely American) and adapting them for use within others. However, it could be accused of being etic in the implicit assumption that these principles are universal and offer shared frames of reference across diverse populations. Critical scholars describe the Excellence Study as positivist and hence unsuitable for incorporating interpretive and symbolic processes, let alone non-Western societies (L'Etang and Pieczka, 1996, 2006; Hatch, 1997; Holtzhausen, 2000; Leitch and Neilson, 2001). While the specific applications attempt to embrace difference, the generic notions of pluralism, autonomy, symmetrical communication, and a right to involvement and debate, are largely Western ideas.

In practice too, as Wakefield (1996) states, "many multinationals transfer their own philosophies and personnel into new territories to conduct public relations in their traditional way" (p. 17). Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, consultancies are assisting the drive to hegemony by standardising their approaches and practices irrespective of the cultures in which they operate. This standardisation could be seen as a way to 'control' a very different corporate sphere, which in the globalised world is a moving feast of communities of stakeholders swapping in and out of stakeholder relationships. Indeed, these communities are, in microcosm, the "new" general public, as publics lose all sense of meaning in the traditional form (Pal and Dutta, 2008).

Pressures to global hegemony in the UK and Singapore

The UK

Many public relations texts refer to the Anglo-American paradigms of theory and practice as dominant (van Ruler and Vercic, 2004; Skinner, van Essen and Mersham 2004; Sriramesh, 2009). This carries an implication that there is a similarity of approach, between the United States of America (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). However, the recent history of public relations in the UK has a very different provenance from that in the US which has been driven largely from the corporate sector. Modern UK public relations has its origins in the public sector, was oriented towards promoting the public interest and was always much broader in conception than in the US with its emphasis on media relations. It saw its purpose as building communities where citizens could hold government to account and where they in turn understood their rights and responsibilities. It was not until the 1980's (Edwards, 2009) that corporate organisations and consultancies became established in the UK.

Now, however, in the corporate sector the "American Model" has found wide acceptance in UK practice (Ewen, 1996; Millar and Dinan, 2000, 2008). The presence of large and influential US consultancies (e.g., Burson-Marsteller, Hill and Knowlton, Edelman and Fleishman-Hillard) means an inevitable importation of US consultancy practices. Mirroring practice in the USA, heavy advocacy campaigns have been conducted by consultancies for large organisations. Moreover, the more neutral stance of the public sector has been challenged.   The sector has traditionally seen its role as providing "clear, truthful and factual information to citizens" (House of Lords Communications Committee, 2009, p. 7). However, the Labour government headed by Tony Blair and the current Coalition Government have been significantly influenced by American political communicators as evidenced by the numbers advising political parties in the UK. It is notable that UK Government communication has seen an increasing shift in emphasis onto campaigning for policies and for programmes aimed at behaviour change. This 'Americanisation' of UK public relations while undoubtedly

successful in that it has apparently become the norm, is also deeply problematic. The UK has its specific public relations history, a national culture that is more collectivist than the US and a view that public relations should serve the public interest. Yet, in public relations, as in so many other spheres, a willing, reverse colonisation has taken place to the detriment of a unique country- based public relations identity.

Singapore

The lack of research activity and theoretical models about public relations in Asia is well known and lamented by leading scholars in the field (Sriramesh, 2004). For Singapore, a mature economy regularly ranked as Asia's most competitive and globalised, even less such studies exist (Yeap, 1994; Tan, 2001; Chay-Nemeth, 2003; Lim et al., 2005).

Progress has been made with the three applications mentioned above (Sriramesh 2004) and cultural variables have started to enter empirical research (Sriramesh, 1996; Huang, 2000; Lim et al., 2005). However, virtually no progress has been made in conceptually linking these applications to public relations in Asia and hence no models of Asian public relations exist.

We contend that it will never be possible to develop such a model if the Excellence Study remains the hegemonic starting point. Not its etic nature gets in the way, but its empirical methodology: empiricism (in itself a hegemonic approach) restricts public relations research to ever more finely granulated measurable variables and thus to a microscopic perspective. More importantly, empiricism forces researchers to apply observational terms. Hence societies will remain inexplicable if they differ from the 'Western' societies of the Excellence Study because certain conditions are *absent*.

In Singapore, like in many Asian societies, two key concepts are absent that are linchpins of the Excellence Study: competitive pluralism and an independent media system. For cultural and historical reasons best described in the GLOBE-study (House et al., 2004,), Singapore (like all societies in the 'Confucian cluster') does not embrace pluralism as a collectively beneficial concept. Equally alien to these societies are the notions of the liberty and obligation for views to publicly compete. In such a society, the media's function is not to generate discourse, but to support national development and effective governance (Lim, 2005). None of the Confucian societies (except Japan), nor the Southeast Asian societies have what *Freedom House* (Freedomhouse, 2012) considers 'full freedom' of the press, and *Reporters Without Borders* (Reporters Without Borders, 2012) rates no Asian country's freedom of the press as 'good'.

To understand public relations in Singapore, a hermeneutical approach is necessary and Giddens' (1984, 1991, 2000, 2002) structuration and late modernity theory is helpful (as suggested by Falkheimer, 2007, 2009 as well as Cozier and Witmer, 2001). It integrates individual micro-, and societal macro-levels of analysis by rejecting the dichotomy between agency and structure. Instead, Giddens describes how social structures are reproduced by repetitive individual acts, but also serve as the enablers to these acts. Organisations and their environments are enabling and reproducing conditions of each other through communication, both mediated and direct.

Giddens also contends that humans have a general interpretive capacity that allows them as individuals, groups or as society to be self-conscious, to monitor their interactions and to ascribe meaning to them. To Giddens, this 'reflexivity' has evolved over time and is rooted in individualism of society in 'late modernity'. 'Western' societies thus lead the way, while others are at earlier stages. Mediated communication is pivotal for reflexivity, as it creates symbolic spaces in which joint interpretations evolve without humans and organizations having to be in each other's presence. Public relations co-creates those joint interpretations by ritualizing an organisation's involvement in society (Falkheimer, 2007, 2009).

A hermeneutic inquiry into public relations in Singapore should therefore be led by three questions:
  • What dominant structure - if not pluralism - enables public relations and is, in turn, reproduced by it?

- What is the dominant symbolic space - if not professional, independent media - where shared meaning is co-created by public relations?
- What is the stage of society's reflexivity?

We suggest that the following answers are necessary, albeit incomplete, components of a model of public relations in Singapore and in its Confucian neighbours:

Effective public relations requires and sustains political power: organizations with greater ability to dominate the actions of other parts of society are also better able to construct a shared sense and meaning. Reversely, the ability to manage an organization's relationship with society translates into greater access to the resources needed to maintain political dominance. The government plays a central role in organisations' relations with Singaporean society, and is even described as the 'main stakeholder' in any public relations efforts. For organisations, to support the dominant coalition's agenda (in Singapore this agenda comprises resilient growth, outstanding infrastructure and effective governance) means creating the conducive conditions for effective public relations.

The professional media are a formal, but not the dominant sense-making agent. Rather, the dominant symbolic spaces in which organisations manage their relationships are either direct or commercial (or both). Public relations for organisations is predominantly conducted in interpersonal, direct ways that circumvent the formal media system, e.g. during events, sponsored activities, feedback sessions, meet-the-people sessions (for politicians), in hotlines, online forums and often managed by so-called 'community relations', not 'public relations' officers. Instead, social media are an alternative symbolic space and Singaporeans globally lead the way in online activity (Schwab 2010, p. 310). They replace the 'expert system' of media with communication that is at the same time informal, direct and independent of extraneous sources of power. Formal communication by corporations exists, but is almost exclusively commercial. Its symbolic (and physical) spaces are advertising, advertorials and ubiquitous shopping malls, Singapore's main and most accessible public spaces. Within these spaces, the persuasive intent is overt, the topics are limited and the transactional relations between corporations and publics are accepted and permanently reproduced.

Singapore has reached late modernity with the sharp rise of its society's reflexivity. The success of social media is an indicator of this development. Singapore society's reflexivity has been low for decades and organisations' have typically managed relations with aggregates of individuals, rather than with self-aware groups. This is currently changing rapidly. Publics are no longer just aggregates of fans for commercial goods, but are beginning to self-consciously form around societal goals and non-commercial activities, very often on-line. Their communication creates shared sense while enabling and reproducing groups' self-awareness. It is with these newly self-aware groups that corporations are now expanding their relationships from a purely transactional to a broader nature.

Discussion and Conclusions

Models, matrices and mandates that attempt to categorise and simplify the complex world of practice have been promoted as a potential ways forward by both the academy and practice (Vercic, Grunig and Grunig, 1996; Grunig, 2009; Sriramesh, 2009; Sriramesh and Vercic, 2009; Global Alliance, 2012). However, the lack of progress in analysing public relations across cultures indicates that global models are problematic. The world is increasing in complexity and simplification does not provide an answer to the challenge Schwab (2010a) extends. Devising an all-embracing model that encompasses such complexity results in broadly-conceptualised models that are clearly inadequate. The current models and their underlying empiricism are rooted in 'western' thinking. They were designed in a less complex world where western paradigms in management and research were dominant and not for a present in which divergent views of public relations have to be considered as cultures seek to assert their own identities (Pal and Dutta, 2008; Sriramesh, 2009).

We naturally do not propose to give up empirical research altogether, nor the search for commonalities. However, we contend that a hermeneutic, divergent approach should lead the way. This can and should be followed by empirical observation.

Public relations is a cultural, political and economic expression of the physical and symbolic place in which it is located and profoundly influenced by its specific history and culture. The authors of this paper call for that diversity and richness to be recognised. It is a disservice to the public relations community to seek simplifications where they need not or cannot be found. The strengthening of the academy and practice of public relations depends on an ability to embrace complexity and diversity, indeed they should champion it.

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Volunteers, Change and Communication: Global Issues from a Local Perspective

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Abstract

Volunteer organisations play a major role in developed economies worldwide contributing billions of dollars to the economy. Volunteerism has brought about innovation and economic efficiency as well as social cohesion, through the significant contribution that volunteers make. Receiving no monetary compensation, volunteers seek intangible rewards to fulfil different needs and motivations thus improving the efficiency of organisations, financially and socially. Through action research as a participant observer, this case study of an Australian adult learning centre examines the effects of change and key communication strategies in a voluntary organisation to better manage, empower and retain volunteers.

Key words: Volunteers, change, communication, non-profit, action research

Introduction

Volunteer organisations play a major role in developed economies worldwide. For example, in the United States over 84 million volunteers contribute more than US$239 billion annually to the economy (Randle & Dolnicar, 2009). Similarly across the Atlantic, 23 million UK residents volunteer each year and inject over £44 billion into the economy (Randle & Dolnicar, 2009). In Australia, volunteering is estimated to contribute tens of billions of dollars to the economy each year, donated by a workforce of over 6.3 million individuals (Randle & Dolnicar, 2009). Extant research on volunteering in the non-profit sector highlights the social or group aspect of this activity (Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996; Heidrich, 1990). For older adults in particular, factors motivating voluntarism include a sense of being needed, helpful and valued, as well as altruism and the desire for socialisation (Tang, Morrow-Howell, & Hong, 2009). This case study of an Australian adult learning centre investigates the issue of volunteer motivation in the non-profit sector during a time of organisational change. Using action research methods as a participant observer, the study focuses on the preparation, dissemination and consequences of communication in the lead-up to, during and immediately following the relocation to new premises as well as the post-relocation settling-in period. The Centre's original premises were in a somewhat dilapidated old building. The new facility is in a state-of-the-art building located within the local council's main administration precinct, although the Centre is run independently of the Council. Although such a move may be considered advantageous by many, the Centre's volunteer workers, tutors and members (paying clients who attend classes) are mainly older people who initially exhibited some resistance to the change and the accompanying introduction of new technology. Hence, communication played a key role in the change process in order to maintain the support of all key stakeholders, especially the volunteer workers some of whom had been associated with the Centre for many years.

Methodology

The case study was conducted using action research in the role of participant observer at an adult learning centre located in a suburb of an Australian State capital city. The focus of the research was on the preparation, dissemination and consequences of a change management communication process involving the physical relocation of the Centre during the pre and post-relocation and settling-in periods. The principal researcher was employed at the Centre during this time as the Transition Coordinator. Using a mixed method approach,

the effects of various communication strategies on the Centre's volunteers and tutors, and their perceptions of the Centre's culture were investigated. The primary method of data collection was semi-structured interviews before and after the relocation to new premises. In addition, pre and post-relocation surveys of fee paying members of the Centre (clients who attend courses) were conducted. These surveys provided an insight into volunteer motivation at the Centre before and after the change, by measuring differences in perceived service quality. The average age of all respondents (volunteers, tutors and members) was more than 60 years. In total, 38 depth interviews were conducted (7 tutors and 12 volunteers both pre and post-relocation). The survey to members was also distributed pre and post-relocation with 153 and 195 usable responses received, representing response rates of 26.4% and 32.7% respectively. The data were analysed using SPSS 19 for the surveys and NVivo 9 for the interviews.

Findings

The pre-relocation interviews indicated a lack of adequate internal communication at the Centre; a common problem within voluntary organisations (Lewis, 1999). The main vehicle for communication was a 'message book' where volunteers left messages for each other, and sporadic volunteer meetings which had diminished in frequency over time. As one volunteer put it, "No-one seems to tell anyone anything that is happening." The communication void was mirrored by a lack of appropriate leadership. Prior to the relocation, the part-time paid administrator was the only person who provided any direction to the volunteers. This often took the form of top-down, one-way instruction. In the words of one volunteer, "They changed some of the forms but we were not consulted – there is a teacher mentality – do as I say." One consequence of this was a lack of initiative and innovation among volunteers. An 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' mentality prevailed, with volunteers reluctant to try anything new. Creativity, confidence and a willingness to take ownership of one's contribution were in short supply. Added to this was a fear of change and the unknown resulting from the impending move. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the age profile of the volunteers, concerns about the introduction of new technology were commonplace. As a volunteer observed, "There may be a bit of a panic for some volunteers if they have to use a computer." Further concerns centred on the intended new location for the Centre – within the City Council administrative complex. Volunteers feared losing their sense of ownership over the Centre. There were apprehensions about a take-over by "big brother" and bureaucratic encroachment. The comments of the following volunteer respondents typified these concerns.

> *Being somewhat of an anti-bureaucrat, I'm worried when we get a little closer to the centre of the governing body that perhaps that we might have a bit more interference.*

> *This old place is not really 'ours' and I think the new one will be much better and we have the opportunity to put our mark on it, but I wonder if we might lose some of our autonomy in the move.*

Given this situation, the need to actively involve volunteers in the relocation process was apparent. Allowing volunteers a voice in the decision-making process was a key element of the strategy devised to manage internal communication, both immediately before, during and after the relocation period. Giving volunteers the opportunity to express their opinions and granting them greater autonomy has been shown to increase levels of organisational commitment (Shin & Kleiner, 2003). In the role of Transition Coordinator, the principal researcher was responsible for both developing and implementing the communication strategy. Action research has an applied, practical focus (Cresswell, 2008). It explores real world problems with the aim of developing solutions. Action research takes its cue from the perceptions of practitioners within particular local practice contexts (Herr & Anderson, 2005). It involves continuous reflectivity - the 'action spiral' - which consists of 'plan, act, observe, reflect, plan, act, observe, reflect, etc.' (Muirhead, 2002). The communication strategy was initially informed and continuously adjusted using these principles.

The physical presence of the Transition Coordinator at the Centre prior and post-move was integral to the success of the strategy. It enabled all stakeholders to talk about their fears, ask questions and be reassured. Whilst quite draining at times, being on-site reinforced the necessity of change and reduced the trauma and anxiety that change brings. In retrospect, the Coordinator's presence resulted in members and volunteers

forming a deep sense of dependency; a feeling that the Centre could not function unless the Coordinator was there. This resulted in later having to slowly disengage from the Centre's day-to-day administration to enable the volunteers to regain a sense of autonomy. However, a comparison of the before and after survey results provided an indication of the overall success of the communication strategy. Member perceptions of customer service provided by the volunteer workers actually improved somewhat after the move, suggesting at a minimum that motivation levels had been maintained.

Implications and Conclusion

Organisations face many challenges when implementing change in terms of both its processes and content. Not least is the challenge of maintaining high morale. There is still much to learn about anxiety and stress during change which is often seen as disruptive, negative, unnecessary and complex. In particular resistance to change is brought about by fear resulting in decreased morale, a demotivated workforce and/or loss of personnel (Edmonds, 2011). Implementing change can be costly in terms of human resources. Considerable attention must be paid to the sequence of communication in order to involve volunteers and other stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition. Covin and Kilmann (1993) stated that whilst the general importance of communication during change has been empirically demonstrated and generally agreed amongst practitioners as a key factor, specified actions taken by implementers have been left unexplained and have rarely been studied. In addition, implementation of change strategies is often left to middle managers who struggle with the process of managing subordinates' emotions, anxieties and defensiveness (Luscher & Lewis, 2008). This study has identified that change needs to have a 'human touch', communication needs to be consistent, simple to understand and frequent. Above all there is no substitute for the physical presence of the key communicator who must be available for consultation, and be willing and able to deal with emotional upheaval.

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On Time and Public Relations: The Objective and Subjective Construction of Organisation-Public Relationships

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Abstract

This paper reflects on a recent empirical study on corporate philanthropy that sought to understand how giving and receiving managers attribute meaning to corporate philanthropic relationships. It was found that giving-managers sought to govern the management of giving programmes through the imposition of time. This paper identifies the broader relevance of the study's findings for public relations research and for understanding organisation-public relationships/engagement.

Keywords: Time, Engagement, Organisation-Public Relationships, Corporate Philanthropy.

Introduction

In modern physics, two complementary notions of time present themselves. First, as descriptions of the way things *are* (as in a state of *being*), and second, as descriptions of how things *change* through the temporal notion of *becoming*. Such notions reinforce the fact that time is linear thereby moving from past to present to future (Ridderbos, 2002). In a recent empirical study on corporate philanthropy that sought to understand how giving and receiving managers attribute meaning to corporate philanthropic relationships, it was found that giving-managers sought to govern the management of giving programmes through the imposition of time in ways quite similar to a physics conception of time – i.e. in hard, scientific, mechanical and objective ways. This paper reflects on that study and identifies the broader relevance of the study's findings for public relations research and for understanding organisation-public relationships/engagement.

Time in a recent study of corporate philanthropic relationships

Giving and receiving are acts that include progressions over time, to give is to *then* receive. The suggestion that, "getting is important, too, but giving comes first" (Bremner, 1996, p.xi) highlights the order of events carried out under the banner of giving in a linear way. Of course, to give and to then receive establishes an enduring system of reciprocity where the receivers are compelled to 'give back' in some form (Mauss, 1924), thereby maintaining a linear notion of time. Thus, a system of gift/counter-gift can be envisaged whereby recipient becomes donor in a re-occurring continuous spiral of giving activity motivating the economy of gift exchange (Godbout cited in Beatty, 2006). This notion was further developed in a consumer behaviour context by Sherry (1983) who proposed a typology demonstrating how patterns of exchange integrate formal relationships between customers purchasing gifts and the receivers of those gifts (e.g. spouses, children, friends). Sherry (1983) explained how both donors and recipients are driven to give, receive and reciprocate in a process of exchange where social relationships are formed, maintained, developed and severed over time. This conversation set the scene for a focus on time, and managers' temporal presuppositions, in a recent study of corporate philanthropy.

The study I report on here used narrative analysis (Cunliffe, Luhman & Boje, 2004; Czarniawska, 1999; Gabriel, 2000; Lawler, 2002) for methodological guidance and paid attention to participants' use, and experience, of objective (e.g. clock) and subjective (e.g. durational) notions of time. Both managers who made allocation decisions regarding philanthropic contributions (giving-managers) and managers who were

primarily responsible for accepting those contributions (receiving-managers) – were interviewed. Several time-related findings were reported.

Giving-managers sought to manage their corporation's philanthropy, and the recipients of their philanthropy, through the imposition of finite, conventional business-oriented timeframes creating beginnings and endings suited to the corporate desire for control in a linear sense. For example, one giving-manager described a relationship, in part, in this way, "…we funded the work they did for 5 years…" and another relationship in this way, "…that's a 3 year funding thing that's just ended…". Giving, according to this manager and others, was explained as uniform, regular, precise, and measurable with beginnings and endings as the above examples show (Ancona, Okhuysen & Perlow, 2001). Time was a 'point of negotiation' where the terms and the conditions of the philanthropic contract were brought to an end or continued through re-negotiation. More so the former. This was explicitly demonstrated in the narrations by one giving-manager when talking about two different philanthropic relationships, "...we have been partners with them for 8 years now and we are just looking at renewing it at the moment" and "…this year is actually our ten year anniversary so we have had talks with the Chief Executive there trying to see if there is a future relationship for us".

It turns out that those philanthropic relationships were ended, not because there was no longer the need for corporate support of non-profit organisations, but because giving-managers were being careful with their resources, and time was used as a contractual 'out'. By limiting philanthropy to specific time-periods, corporate-giving organisations wrote efficiency, effectiveness and productivity into the corporate philanthropy lexicon (Cunliffe et al., 2004). Time was used as an excuse to release corporate-giving organisations of their duty, their commitment, and their obligation to non-profit receiving organisations at some point. That is, obligation on the part of corporate-giving organisations were time-specific and time-controlled, not by coincidence, but by intent. Such intent had less relevance to the objectives of non-profit receiving organisations.

Managers, both giving and receiving, also used cyclical notions of time to explain philanthropic relationships. The repetition of annual and monthly giving actions/events constituted a frame for giving related to 'cyclical' time. Cyclical time organises philanthropic life for corporate-giving organisations and for non-profit organisations whose operations depend on corporate giving (Ancona et al., 2001). The accumulation of repetitive annual or monthly giving, and thus receiving, located giving-managers in stable networks of philanthropic relationships whereby giving became routine, mechanical and un-reflexive (see Edensor, 2006). As one giving-manager put it, "they send a certain amount each month", and as another put it, "we made a commitment from the beginning to build two houses a year". As one receiving-manager expressed, "essentially they've gifted us $100,000 each year". Another suggested, "so [Corporate C] provided us with about 45 school bags…and we distributed them to families immediately prior to the start of the school year". The difference between cyclical time and linear time is that while the latter travels in a linear way never to be repeated, the former repeats. The repetition of events – such as, building two houses a year and sending money on a monthly basis – represents consistency in giving programmes and therefore the easy management of giving and of relationships, including recipients. Attention to time reveals people's temporal presuppositions. These findings have relevance for public relations researchers. I come to that relevance after a short explanation of objective and subjective notions of time.

Objective and subjective notions of time

In a world that seems increasingly governed by organisation and structure, it is unsurprising that the conception of time attached to a clock (e.g. 6:00 pm) dominates our lives and our interactions with others in precise, measurable and calculable ways. Objective time is that modernist conception whereby, in the material sense, time has the ability to structure action into "…quantifiable units such that the units are homogeneous, uniform, regular, precise, deterministic, and measurable" (Ancona et al., 2001, 514). This concept has been co-opted to drive the need for efficiency and production, and has made possible the need for control and function in the modern organisation (Cunliffe et al., 2004).

However, it is the imprecision of our subjectivities such as feelings (tiredness, stress) and emotions (love, anger, envy) that help determine for us when we carry out certain actions, when we engage others, and the meaningfulness of social relationships. Notions of time are enmeshed in an enduring debate between "time as a physical, cosmological, objective experience and time as a psychological, phenomenological, subjective experience" (Cunliffe et al., 2004). This objective/subjective dichotomy reminds us that time is experienced, and made sense of, in diverse ways. Indeed, a review of the philanthropy study discussed suggested that managers used objective notions of time to control philanthropic relationships and to make philanthropy a stable, predictable and strategic organisational function.

Researching time in public relations research

By paying attention to how people conceive of their organisation-public relationship experiences using time, either as an organisational actor or as a public actor, researchers can uncover deeper desires and intentions about how actors believe organisation-public relationships are and should be organised. That is, at the risk of oversimplification, whether organisational-public relationships are phenomena to be controlled and structured in the pursuit of strategic efficiency and effectiveness explained with reference to days, years and months that pass by on a mechanical clock. Or whether relationships are phenomena that engage, challenge and change ways of thinking and acting arising from human interactions explained with reference to moments and durations that pass quickly (slowly), when interactions are meaningful (less meaningful) (see Levine, 1997). This will allow researchers to understand whether actors see a relationship as a means to an end or whether they see them as meaningful social experiences.

Exploring people's presuppositions about time may, for example, reveal whether organisational actors believe publics are simply organisms to be controlled and manipulated for their organisational self-interests. Asking organisational and public actors to narrate their relationship experiences over time can thus be revealing. Future public relations research should consider using the varied theoretical conceptions of time available in academic writings as analytical lenses for interpreting how actors make sense of organisation-public relationships.

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Virtue ethics, CSR and 'corporate citizenship'

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Abstract

The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management values the dignity of the individual; human rights; and equal opportunity. Its Code of Ethics declares a professional's duty to broader society. The code advocates education to reinforce this ethical outlook. This paper contributes a specific approach towards the practitioner's ethical understanding. It enlists the critique of Alasdair MacIntyre who strongly criticises much conventional ethical theory. MacIntyre's teleological approach is joined with a notion of a hierarchy of narratives of ethical expectations in an argument which counsels that public relations must always operate at the highest level of these narratives.

Keywords: Virtue ethics; Corporate social responsibility; Corporate citizenship; Public relations; Communitarianism; Alasdair MacIntyre.

An approach to moral theory

Alasdair MacIntyre's celebrated 1980s initial and revised editions of *After virtue: a study in moral theory* (MacIntyre, 1985) galvanised ethical scholarship and continues to give insights. MacIntyre condemns the characterless nature of modern morality. This paper suggests the relevance of his ideas to corporate social responsibility and public relations. MacIntyre takes the side of a number of philosophers who claim that moral judgements are now usually arrived at in a manner described as 'emotivism'. Emotivism is the notion that in contemporary society whether social actions get to be considered as good or bad depends more on how they are declared by the people who describe them as such. Detached or ultimate yardsticks by which the 'truth' of morality can be judged tend to be discarded or neutralised by sophisticated philosophical argument. One such discarded yardstick is the Kantian *a priori* of sacred duty: "I assume that there are pure moral laws which determine entirely, *a priori* the conduct of a rational being..." (Kant & Meiklejohn, 1991, p. 519). Another discard is any notion of universally agreed principles of community purpose. MacIntyre's argument revolves around this second yardstick. He refers to ancient Greek citizens' terms of involvement with their polis – their civic community.

This civic engagement founded a two millennia tradition of identity formed in terms of a person's behaviour within their temporally and eschatologically conceived community. Citizen and society were bound together by a 'telos' – a common purpose where the morality of everybody was judged in terms of their compliance with measures which allowed the success of society – however problematic many of those societies may appear through 21st century eyes. This cultural mindset persisted in secular and religious commonsense up to the time of modernity when more 'rational' and 'enlightened' thought emerged to facilitate self-reflective individualism. MacIntyre's point is that some of this 'enlightenment' has led to narcissistic individualism and to a bureaucratic, pseudo-scientific and pseudo-academic approach to ordaining what is right and what is wrong in ways detached from community realities. His thesis is acutely relevant to an organisation which declares itself socially responsible and acting like a good 'corporate citizen'. Corporate ethicists and public relations practitioners might like to consider this controversy. Relevant to this debate is the suggestion by Starck (2000), Kruckerberg (2006), Cuthbertson (1997) and others that corporate relations practice should involve itself with communitarianism and other initiatives aimed at developing or repairing democratic institutions. If corporations are to undertake this sort of patronage there is a double need to have a clearer understanding of the ethics of contemporary society.

A hierarchy of community expectations

This paper suggests a: 'hierarchy of community expectations model' which might be used to assist the corporation to find and respond to appropriate public expectations and public interest. Another paper would be needed to fully explicate what 'appropriate' may mean in this context. Suffice it to say that indisputable morality exists in many aspects of the expectations and the discourse of genuinely democratic governments and some of the wiser parts of civil society. These are the aspects of government and its services which it is difficult to take issue with, as well as much of the outlook of the more respected of the not for profit institutions: the Oxfams, the Médecins Sans Frontières, the Save the Children Funds. Laudable moral telos also exists in a plethora of writings which are relevant to corporations such as those by (Beder, 2006), (Korten, 1995), (Ewen, 1996), (Moloney, 2006), (Gare, 1996). Rather than 'contributing to restoring and maintaining community' in the communitarian fashion (Starck, 2000), the ethical public relations professional needs to respect and scour existing democratic institutions in order to take appropriate teleological – that is 'civic purpose' cues from them and advise 'corporate citizens' to so align rather than to indulge in some sort of 'two-way symmetrical' discussion. Compromised outlooks and consequent amalgams of moral stances imply an attempt to alter norms and precepts of the 'target' group. This would be tantamount to disrespecting the virtues of civic telos.

The below diagram is an attempt to help imagine how and where a search for virtuous telos might take place among the discourses of many overlapping governmental, community and civil society institutions. The objective of the informed public relations practitioner should be to undertake this search so that she or he is in a position to advise the best way to fulfil the 'corporate citizenship' promise – the best way to be moral. The advice should be about finding and conforming to strands of telos which have been validated by debates between different currents of social consciousness. Clearly there is much that is despicable in social and political discourse and the method suggested here is vulnerable to arguments that it is not certain or scientific. But MacIntyre's thesis indicates that modernist philosophical and supposedly social scientific 'certainties' about morality are often ill founded. Secondly there has to be some faith that wise and fair discourse can prevail given the right circumstances. Without such faith the world certainly would be a nihilistic place where nobody could ever call themselves ethical or professional.

What is needed with reference to the putatively professional field of public relations and corporate social responsibility is diligent and transparent efforts by intelligent practitioners who take the ethical rhetorical legacy of Aristotle, Isocrates, Cicero and Quintilian seriously as they research and discuss the telos of community expectations.

The diagram contains the following labels:

Community expectations and associated teleological narrative (C. E. +T.). ... implies certain overlapping qualities of morality. The good corporate citizen's moral quality should encompassing most of these expectations:

National Government Various civil society C. E. + T. (including laws)

Local civil society & commercial C.E. +T.

Various political C. E. + T.

Various religious and global civil society C. E. + T.

Local communal C. E. +T. (E. g. Third World)

Various trade union C. E. + T.

Professional, PR and CSR must encompasses most C. E. +T if the corporate citizen is to be perceived as moral.

UN Global Compact C.E. +T.

Spheres of moral narratives

The above flat diagram might be better imagined as a three dimensional system of eccentric spheres and spheroids representing contrasting levels and types of community expectation and civic purpose. These elements sometimes encompass, sometime exceed, sometimes vary from, sometimes ally and often debate with each other. The point is to envisage these discourses as moral narratives which bind societies together. These moral narratives imply expectations at certain levels and in terms of certain conceptualisations of community ranging for example from the expectations of impoverished third world villages to the expectations of the political, religious, commercial and third sector communities which take those village discourses into account. National governmental and relevant United Nations bodies could be depicted as propagating purpose and expectations which over-arch, and usually exceed some of the more frugal local ambitions to do with qualities of health, education, freedom, equality, income, personal respect and so on. In order for a 'corporate citizen' to act appropriately in this complex and hierarchical milieu the corporation's own moral fundamentals must encompass, largely exceed and intelligently respond to all relevant social narratives and expectations including those of the people who it proclaims to be 'in citizenship' with.

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Challenging the disciplinary borders of PR to foster communication across borders

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Abstract

There is much celebration of globalisation in contemporary academic, political and business discourse. To a large extent, discussion of international relations and communication have shaken off the critiques of colonisation and imperialism and taken residence within more positive narratives such as Castells' concept of 'network society' (Castells, 2000) and his most recent notions of a 'global civil society' and the 'new public sphere' (Castells, 2010) in which communication connects people and organisations around the world.

Keywords: Public relations, PR, paradigms, multiparadigm, multidisciplinary, multicultural

Within public relations, there have been claims for the global applicability of Excellence theory of PR (e.g. Verčič, L. Grunig & J. Grunig, 1996) as well as, more recently, discussion of multiple emergent paradigms (e.g. Curtin, 2012; L'Etang, 2011; Radford, 2012) and welcoming of a 'sociocultural turn' (Edwards & Hodges, 2011) which, according to advocates, enable PR to be relevant and sensitive to local social, cultural and political contexts.

However, despite expanding scholarly horizons, particularly among critical theorists, globalisation in much public relations theory and practice largely equates to Americanisation. This has been noted by critical PR theorists including L'Etang (2008a, 2012) and Pieczka (1996, 2006) who have identified US-originating models, such as Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Four Models and Excellence theory (L. Grunig, J. Grunig & Dozier, 2002) as comprising the dominant paradigm of public relations internationally. While alternative conceptualisations and theories of PR exist and challenge the dominant US body of knowledge, particularly in Europe, recent analysis in Australia by Macnamara and Crawford (2010) confirmed that most documented histories of public relations remain American or American derivatives, such as the work of Cutlip (1994, 1995), Ewen (1996), Hiebert (1966), Marchand (1998), Miller (1999), Olasky (1987), Pearson (1992), Tedlow (1979), Tye (1998) and Zawawi (2009). As L'Etang (2008b) noted in a paper on PR history, "US scholars have always tended to assume the activities referred to as PR have been invented by Americans and then exported elsewhere" (p. 328).

The first stage of an Australian history of public relations reported in this paper supports L'Etang's (2004) study of UK public relations, European experiences and emerging African and Asian research which illustrate that localised PR practice around the world has evolved in distinct ways and is embedded culturally, politically and socially within in the societies in which it operates – not simply imported from the US. For instance, in Europe the practices referred to as public relations in Anglo-American terms are widely used (Bentele, 2004), but "rarely under that name" (van Ruler & Verčič, 2004, p. 1), being referred to as strategic communication (Aarts & Van Woerkum, 2008), communication management (van Ruler & Verčič, 2005), and corporate communication (Cornelissen, 2011; Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). These practices draw on a range of theoretical frameworks beyond US PR models. Nevertheless, the dominant body of disciplinary knowledge of public relations applied in Australia and many parts of Asia remains grounded in American behaviourism and modernist management theory and framed within capitalist and corporatist ideology (Hatherell & Bartlett, 2005).

The second part of this paper contributes to critical analysis of dominant models of PR in a context of globalisation. Today, organisations and individuals have at their disposal technologies for communication without borders. But, drawing on social theories and concepts advanced outside the field of public relations including Asiacentricity, Afrocentricity, transversality, and notions from the sociology of professions and

public diplomacy, it is argued here that while geographic, political and technological borders are increasingly disappearing in the 21st century, disciplinary borders exist in the PR landscape that are equally or more restrictive.

Miike (2010) echoes a growing call for a challenge to "Eurocentrism in communication scholarship" and proposes a role for "Asiacentricity in de-Westernising theory and research". His argument can be applied as much, or more so, to US centricity. Other scholars writing within the framework of black studies have presented the same argument for Afrocentricity (e.g. Asante, 2007 and Karenga, 2002). Miike notes that humanity is deeply felt through cultural particularities, not through universal abstractions. He adds:

> Meaning, which is vital to any communicative conduct, is always constructed and deconstructed in 'lived concreteness'. This everyday concreteness, as it relates to human interactions, is intertwined with collective memories and cultural practices (Miike, 2010, p. 2).

In considering such arguments, it is important to understand that alternative centricities are not proposed as replacements to dominant modes with their own ethnocentrism. Miike says that culture-specific investigations do not seek to universalise their own views, they do not deny the value of other cultural perspectives on Africans and Asians, and "being Afrocentric or Asiacentric does not always mean the opposite of being Eurocentric" (p. 4). He says Asiacentricity, which he differentiates from Asiacentrism and Eurocentrism as undesirable universalising approaches, can complement and contribute to, rather than replace pan-cultural theories. However, he argues that multiple culture-specific perspectives are essential to gain an understanding of human communication and humanity. Fundamental to the argument presented by Miike and others is that non-Western perspectives should be organic to local cultures and fully explored in a naturalistic way, not derived by first developing Western theories or hypotheses and then testing them for applicability in non-Western cultures which often leads to celebrating commonalities and ignoring or trivialising differences. However, most global studies of PR have taken the route of developing Western theory (e.g. Excellence theory) and then testing its applicability in non-Western cultures. When some applicability is found, the theory becomes part of the discourse of globalisation. But what other approaches exist in those cultures with greater applicability and social relevance?

Curtin and Gaither's cultural economic model of international public relations based on the 'circuit of culture' proposes that PR can no longer be conceived only in Western or any other singular terms and "embraces the rich variety of public relations functions and formats throughout the world" functioning iteratively within local circuits of culture (2007, p. 206). However, while used in contemporary critical analyses (e.g. Al-Kandarai & Gaither, 2011), this model remains largely peripheral to the dominant body of knowledge in PR and much global practice. Likewise, a recent analysis of PR in Australasia by Macnamara (2012) illustrated that, while sociocultural and other emergent models of PR are discussed "in the relatively sparsely populated enclaves inhabited by readers of scholarly journals and critical texts" these have not, as yet, "trickled down" and "been widely taken up in the broader context of PR education or practice in Australia and major South East Asian countries" (n.p.).

Miike supports the concept of transversality proposed by Hwa Yol Jung (1995, 2004, 2009) as an approach to constructing knowledge globally instead of seeking universality. Miike says that transversality considers a multiplicity of viewpoints, perspectives, belief systems, and practices to identify commonalities, but does not remove them from their cultural context to universalise them. As Jung (1995) says: "In axiological terms, transversal values are values that cross two or more cultures and are common to them but they are not transformed into universal values" (p. 38). Thus, shared values are identified, but each retains its cultural context and embeddedness, and representatives of various cultures are allowed to speak in their own voice.

Analysis of PR as global communication is also usefully informed by other fields such as the sociology of professions and public diplomacy. While much study of the professions has focussed on functionalist perspectives based on the work of Durkheim and traits, skills, power and social structures and stratification, including critical examination of the monopolisation of professions, UK sociologist Keith Macdonald (1995) notes that professions have both an economic order and a social order. In the social context, Morrell (2006)

observes that professions are characterised by high esteem conferred upon them by society at large and he points out that this high esteem derives, not only from technical skills, a body of knowledge or even regulatory frameworks, but "primarily from the wider, deeper and higher social function of their work" (para 4–5). In short, they serve (and/or are perceived to serve) society in some way. L'Etang (2008a) has noted that public relations has failed to engage in exploring a 'sociology of public relations', remaining instead focussed on behaviourist theories about management and control of groups and society.

Public diplomacy has been extensively discussed in PR literature, but authors such as Signitzer (2008) have used comparisons to justify and defend public relations. An alternative view expressed by L'Etang (2008a) and Macnamara (2012) is that, while "there are clear similarities between the role of public relations and that of diplomacy" (L'Etang, p. 238), public diplomacy has some different and unique concepts and principles that can productively inform public relations.

While a number of theories of PR have emerged, the field is preoccupied with disciplinary demarcation and defensive rhetoric, as Hatherell and Bartlett warn (2005, p. 11), and at risk of becoming a "scholarly ghetto" (Pfau & Wan, 2006, p. 111) – a sub-discipline within the social sciences and humanities that remains dislocated from evolving communication theory, sociology, anthropology, political science, cultural studies, history, and other disciplines.

This does not mean that public relations cannot be practised across borders, whether they are those of nation states, geographic, or cultural. Indeed, PR is increasingly being deployed globally and is contributing to international relations and trade. But to facilitate true communication and global relationships and perform a societal role that is equitable and ethical, public relations needs to further break down its own disciplinary borders that have confined it to a significant extent within functionalist management theory and behaviourist social science and created a tension between its strategic organisational role and its societal role.

This analysis contributes transdisciplinary perspectives that identify ways in which public relations can more fully contribute to transnational and transcultural communication.

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Prepare for Anger, Look for Love: A Ready Reckoner for Crisis Scenario Planners

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Abstract

The nature of organizational crises, coupled with the seriousness of their impact and the likelihood that they will receive high levels of media attention, suggests the need for crisis scenario planners to accurately predict how consumers will respond to companies in crisis. Crises trigger emotions in impacted consumers which facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of crisis response strategies (Coombs and Holladay, 2005) and determine crisis behaviour, such as negative purchase and investment intent (Jorgensen, 1996) and negative word-of-mouth behaviour (McDonald, Sparks, and Glendon, 2010). Emotions and behaviours are normally considered as input variables rather than outputs in scenario planning (Van Notten, Rotmans, Van Asselt, and Rothman 2003:431-432), but justification for examining expected emotional outputs in scenario planning is generally available in literature on multi-criteria decision analysis (Wenstop, 2005), emotional intelligence (Callahan, 2008), and visionary management (Malaska and Holtius, 1999: 357).

Planners have not yet fully investigated the variety, strength or impact of consumer feelings, thoughts, and behaviours that company crises generate. Yet understanding both consumers' psychological and behavioural crisis reactions is important to shape realistic crisis preparation, and for response success. In the area of strategic development of crisis management, there is an abundance of general treatments of emotions in such scenarios. However, researchers have only started to empirically examine crisis emotion responses in the past five years (Kim and Cameron, 2011). Consequently, little attention has been paid to determining the reactions of consumers in real crisis situations. Instead, studies predominantly use case study examinations or experiments. Insight into consumers' crisis reaction processes is of interest to scenario planners, crisis researchers, and public relations practitioners, in particular those combating damage to corporate reputation, as well as marketing managers dealing with plummeting sales.

Mindful of that research gap, this article presents a conceptual framework based on a review of the literature and the results of an exploratory qualitative study. First, we set out the context from scenario and crisis management literature, then present a theoretical framework using Weiner's (1986, 1995) Attribution Theory (WAT) and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2007; Coombs and Holladay, 2002) which both successfully explain crisis reactions.

Keywords: Consumers, crisis, emotions

Literature review

Scenario planning workshops are a strategic decision-making tool used to help a senior management team explore multiple plausible futures for the organization and identify and select feasible and robust strategies to deal with those futures (Franco, Meadows, and Armstrong, 2012). Faced with the unpredictable nature of the current business environment, managers routinely cope with decision-making in crisis situations. The role of emotions in managers' intuitive decision process during crisis situations was underscored in Sayegh, Anthony, and Perrewe's (2004) conceptual model of managerial crisis decision-making. Yet the focus in much of the research has been on managerial monitoring of personal emotions, rather than on response to others' emotions, both of which form the cornerstones of emotional intelligence (EI). Salovey and Mayer's (1990: 189) widely-accepted definition of EI highlights this need for emotion responsiveness as being, "The ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one's thinking and actions." Therefore, in a crisis situation, crisis managers need to, not only monitor their own emotions, but incorporate an awareness of the emotions of those impacted by the crisis, and in formulating responses, effectively deal with the emotions generated.

Scenario planning has enjoyed a wide acceptance among practitioner and academics to support decisions when formulating strategies (Franco et al., 2012). Emotions and behaviours are normally considered as input variables rather than outputs in scenario planning (Van Notten et al., 2003:431-432). An input variable is an ingredient used to plan a scenario and how it plays out, and an output is what is expected to take place as a result. Justification for examining expected emotional outputs in scenario planning is generally available in literature on multi-criteria decision analysis (Wenstop, 2005). The psychological aspects of crisis reactions have not been factored into crisis management planning (Wester, 2011), or into crisis scenario planning. Instead, crisis managers rely on stereotypical assumptions on how the public will react, paying little attention to the reactions of the public in a real crisis situation (Wester, 2011). However, anticipating and planning for these reactions must be firmly grounded in actual situations (Wester, 2011). In order to do so, it is necessary to investigate actual consumer crisis response.

Investigations using Weiner's (1986, 1995) attribution theory (WAT) or Coombs and Holladay's Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) based on WAT have predominantly used experimental research to investigate consumer crisis response. Both WAT and SCCT state that, following a negative event, stakeholders make attributions about the event cause, eliciting emotions which, in turn, generate behaviours. Although emotions facilitate or impede the effectiveness of crisis response strategies (Coombs and Holladay, 2005), emotion is a new crisis research frontier (Jin and Pang, 2010), and has predominantly investigated anger and sympathy. Exceptions include the examination of *schadenfreude* (Coombs and Holladay, 2005), sadness (Jin, 2009), fear (Jin, 2009; McDonald, et al., 2010; Wester, 2011), surprise (McDonald, et al., 2010; Wester, 2011), and grief (Wester, 2011). As researchers assume that positive emotions are unlikely to occur (Wester, 2011), research on positive crisis emotions in a crisis is limited to sympathy (e.g., Coombs and Holladay, 2005; Jorgensen, 1996) or joy (McDonald et al., 2010). Although Frederickson, Tugade, Waugh and Larkin (2003) identified multiple emotional reactions to the terrorist attacks on New York on September 11, 2001, no identified study has questioned consumers about the array of emotions that organizational crises elicit. This leads to the first research question:

RQ 1: What emotions do various crises evoke in consumers?

Experiments have established that different crisis emotions elicit different behavioural responses. For example, anger predicts negative purchase intentions (e.g., Coombs and Holladay, 2007; Jorgensen, 1996), negative word-of-mouth behaviour (Coombs et al., 2006; Coombs and Holladay, 2007; McDonald et al., 2010), and complaining (Jorgensen, 1996; McDonald et al., 2010). Sadness creates a preference for emotional support, while fear leads to venting intentions or avoidance (Jin, 2009), complaining and negative word-of-mouth behaviour (McDonald et al., 2010). Joy predicts loyalty and negatively predicts negative word-of-mouth behaviour (McDonald et al., 2010). Sympathy may engender stronger supportive behaviour from stakeholders (Coombs and Holladay, 2005). In taking an experimental approach, these studies do not capture the potential spectrum of behavioural reactions that crises elicit from consumers. Therefore, our second research question is:

RQ 2: What behaviours do various crises evoke in consumers?

Method

We investigated consumers' emotional and behavioural range of responses to crisis using eight focus groups whose participants (*n* = 54) were enlisted using purposive sampling as they were required to have experienced the effects of organizational crises. A professional moderator established rapport and effectively channelled conversation to the areas of concern. Data was videotaped and transcribed.

The analysis method selected was a quantitative approach using systematic coding via content analysis using an iterative approach. We used an inductive method to allow patterns, themes, and categories to emerge, and established an audit trail in data collection and analysis to enhance reliability (see Miles and Huberman,

1994). Emotions were categorised into six emotions categories using Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O'Connor's (1987) list of 135 emotion words.

Results

Most participants recalled multiple emotions in response to 12 recalled crises. Negatively-valenced emotions were directed at those held responsible for the crisis (companies and their managers, governments and government agencies, media) and positively-valenced emotions at those impacted by the crisis (companies and their employees, the general public, scapegoats). The strongest and most prevalent consumer emotion was anger, followed in decreasing prevalence by fear, sadness, joy, surprise, and love.

A total of 13 behaviours were identified, both problem-focused coping behaviour aimed to alter the distress-causing situation, and emotion-focused coping behaviour aimed at regulating distress (Folkman and Lazarus, 1988) with boycott and avoidance being common responses.

Discussion

This appears to be the first study that uncovered feelings categorized as love which appear linked to crises that had causes that were external to, and uncontrollable by, the organization. In discussing the patterns of emotion-linked behaviour, we argue that there is scope for categorisation of the identified behaviours according to their key driver: emotional or problem-solving. We tabulated this categorisation of behaviours to create a speculative list of remedial actions that organizations could apply.

Taking this consumer-centric approach to crisis reactions is likely to offer valuable new advice for use during preparation for scenario planners. Its application in crisis scenario planning may provide further understanding of the repercussions of consumer emotions, and thus enhance crisis management, especially in developing crisis communications.

This study was exploratory using a small sample, so that data were context-bound. The general population sample self-selected mainly in response to study publicity so there may have been demand characteristics: i.e. participants may have participated in the study because they had experienced, and therefore reported, strong reactions.

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Developing public disaster communication for volunteer recruitment: Understanding volunteer motivations

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Introduction

Communication by response organizations during disasters has been neglected and is often not viewed as an integral part of disaster management (Palttala, Boano, Lund, and Vos, 2012). Yet, in developing a crisis communication instrument designed to assist public organizations in large-scale emergencies, Palttala and Vos (2011) highlighted the need for communication that stimulated people to volunteer in community recovery efforts.

Spontaneous volunteers who converge on disaster areas play a critical role in disaster response, often being first on the scene and typically trusted by victims (Fulmer, Portelli, Foltin, Zimmerman, Chachkes, and Goldfrank, 2007). Characteristically, spontaneous volunteers are seen as hindering relief efforts, and government and emergency management agencies resist harnessing this workforce (Drabek and McEntire, 2003; Steffen and Fothergill, 2009). Yet these untrained volunteers are integral to accomplishing many disaster recovery tasks (Barsky, Trainor, Torres, and Aguirre, 2007).

After floods in January 2011 inundated the central business district and at least 28,000 homes in Brisbane, Australia's third largest city, thousands of well-meaning volunteers converged on the worse-hit areas, resulting in confusion and misdirection (Sweet, 2011). Four volunteer registration centres were established to coordinate volunteer deployment ("Human spirit shines through", 2011), resulting in 62,000 registered volunteers (Update, 2011) and likely triple that number in unregistered volunteers, saving millions of dollars in clean-up costs (Vogler, 2011).

Understanding spontaneous volunteers is critical to establish effective disaster communication plans (Lowe and Fothergill, 2003) to effectively recruit this workforce. Volunteer management plans must be based on valid assumptions about what individuals are *likely* to do, rather than what one hopes they will do (Drabek and McEntire, 2003).

Consequently, this research investigates the motivations of those volunteers, dubbed the "Mud Army" by the media, who cleaned affected houses, businesses, footpaths, and roads following the 2011 Brisbane floods. As anecdotal evidence suggests that many volunteers self-recruited via social media, to guide planners towards effective communication with this workforce, the research also examines the role of social media in volunteer recruitment.

Literature review

Letteri, Masella and Radaelli's (2009) review of the disaster management literature (1980 to 2006), noted that volunteer research was neglected. In particular, little is known about the factors motivating spontaneous

volunteers' behaviour (Guy and Patton, 1989; Beyerlein and Sikkink, 2008), yet most response work is done by community members who are present or nearby during a disaster (Lowe and Fothergill, 2003). Researchers have proposed that volunteer motivations stem from extrinsic factors (e.g., demographic and social factors) and intrinsic factors. Three intrinsic motivators for volunteering are feelings of responsibility, empathy, and the desire to relieve negative emotions.

Guy and Patton (1989) contend that the strongest volunteering motive comes from a basic human need to help others. This instinctive human desire to help others suggests the existence of an *"altruistic gene"* (Wilson, 1978 in Guy and Patton, 1989). This genetic tendency combines with social norms to create a feeling of responsibility to help (Tong, Hung, and Yuen, 2011). Research following Hurricane Katrina (Michel, 2007) and 9/11 (Beyerlein and Sikkink, 2008) has identified feelings of personal responsibility as a major factor in motivating volunteering behaviour. This leads to the first research question.

> RQ 1**:** Did feelings of responsibility motivate helping behaviour in the Brisbane floods?

Emotions matter for disaster relief (Beyerlein and Sikkink, 2008), with two models suggesting that emotions motivate helping behaviour. Research using Batson's (1987, in Michel, 2007) empathy-altruism hypothesis contended that prosocial behaviour is contingent upon one's emotional experience of concern and empathy for others. Individuals that are able to empathize with victims are driven to help (Michel, 2007). This was supported by Beyerlein and Sikkink's (2008) finding that, in response to the 9/11 attacks, feelings of empathy prompted volunteering behaviour.

However, others suggest that not all helping is altruistically motivated. According to Cialdini, Schaller, Houlihan, Arps, Fultz, and Beaman's (1987) negative state relief model, helping behaviour is motivated by an egoistic desire to relieve negative feelings in order to return to a positive emotional state. This is supported by donation behaviour research (e.g., Merchant, Ford, and Sargeant, 2010) and Beyerlein and Sikkink's (2008) 9/11 study which found that sorrow motivated volunteering. As studies examining emotions as drivers of volunteering behaviour are rare, little is known about emotions' influence on volunteering behaviour following disasters. This leads to the next research question.

> RQ 2: What was the role of emotions in motivating volunteering in the Brisbane floods ?

In parallel with volunteer convergence onto physical disaster sites, convergence behaviour is now evident on-line (Hughes, Palen, Sutton, Liu, and Vieweg, 2008). Volunteers organize relief efforts through online social media, organizing groups to encourage these efforts through Wikipedia, Facebook, and Twitter (Hughes, et al., 2008), as well as via blogging sites (Macias, Hilyard, and Fremuth, 2009). Anecdotal evidence in the Brisbane floods suggested that many volunteers self-recruited via social media. Although use of social media may be critical to future disaster management relief efforts, including volunteer recruitment, it has attracted little research, leading to the next question:

> RQ3**:** What role did social media play in volunteer motivation and recruitment in the Brisbane floods?

Methodology

Four months after the floods, we conducted 20-minute semi-structured interviews with 30 volunteers recruited via a volunteer registration website and by snowball sampling. Participants were aged 18 to 61 years, with an even gender mix, earning from US$18,000 to $155,000+. Most were unregistered first-time volunteers who lived adjacent to flooded areas and who volunteered for between one and more than five days. Interview questions were pre-tested on six volunteers. The data analysis took an iterative approach to create a data trail.

Results

Many volunteers felt that helping was something they *"just had to do"*, indicating either an innate need to help or a sense of responsibility. One said, *"you're responsible to help because you're part of the community. You couldn't sit there and not help."* Similarly, one male volunteer said, *"As human beings, we've got to go and help people."*

Elicited emotion words were sorted using Shaver, Schwarz, Kirson, and O'Connor's (1987) list of 135 words and six emotion categories. While viewing flood damage via media reports or on-site, volunteers recalled negatively-valenced emotions of sadness (distress, sadness, upset) and surprise (shock, amazement). A male university student provided a typical response: *"I felt pretty bad....pretty upset and in shock as well. I never thought it would be so bad."* Towards the flood-affected, volunteers reported love category words (empathy, compassion). One older married woman said she felt, *"very compassionate. I felt great affinity for the people...the whole of the flood disaster moved me very deeply."* Towards their work and its results, volunteers reported joy category words (happiness, satisfaction, pleasure, pride). As one said, *"...everyone got in and did what they had to do and were happy to do that...a sense of pride and fulfillment...I felt appreciated by people in the house."*

Facebook was the preferred social medium, used by older respondents for flood updates, and more actively by younger respondents as a tool to recruit friends and establish flood relief action plans. As one young female university student stated, *"If its recruitment from TV, it's not really connected to you. When a friend's sharing on Facebook, it's like them telling you, and you feel more compelled because there's a personal connection to that. You're...doing it because your social group is doing it.*

Discussion and conclusions

This study adds to the small amount of existing literature on disaster-related spontaneous volunteering in Australia and increases understanding of the role of emotions in volunteering behaviour. However, this study had a small sample size, an age group skewed to the younger demographic, and made use of snowball sampling.

Although volunteer convergence may be problematic to relief efforts, we agree with Lowe and Fothergill's (2003) call for a reframing of spontaneous volunteers as a resource for proactive engagement in disaster response and recovery. This has implications for community development strategies for use by government to harness volunteers for future relief efforts.

In keeping with the findings from Lowe and Fothergill's (2003) 9/11 study, we found that spontaneous volunteers converged because they felt compelled to help others. Silva, Marks, and Cherry (2009) similarly identified that many volunteers talked about what they "should" and "ought" to do in disasters, as did our volunteers.

We added to Beyerlein and Sikkink's (2008) findings of both empathy and sorrow as volunteering motivators, establishing that the clean-up volunteers experienced sadness and surprise as a disaster response, love as a victim-oriented response, and joy during the cleanup. With both positive and negative emotions influencing behaviour, this suggests that both Batson 's (1987, in Michel, 2007) and Cialdini et al.'s (1987) models may apply in disaster volunteering. Further, the findings indicate that emotions should be considered in communication planning in disaster management relief plans. For example, volunteer recruitment communication could highlight the distress and suffering of disaster victims to elicit sadness and prompt volunteer behaviour as a coping mechanism, as well victim empathy.

Results from hurricane studies have shown that those embedded in larger social networks are more likely to provide assistance than those in smaller social networks (Haines et al., 1996, in Beyerlein and Sikkink, 2008).

Compatible with this finding, our study indicated that younger volunteers embedded in the large online friendship network that is *Facebook* either promoted volunteering amongst their friendship networks or were recruited as volunteers via *Facebook*. With the increase in on-line disaster convergence behaviour (e.g., Macias et al., 2009), and the little existing research in the disaster literature on the use of social media in volunteer recruitment, this trend requires further investigation. We also recommend that disaster relief organizations use social media as a volunteer recruitment tool, and encourage its use for volunteer self-recruitment.

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Share Corporate Social Responsibility Best Practice and Forgo Competitive Advantage

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Abstract

Cross-sector partnerships are capable of achieving solutions to large scale societal problems, which when successful, are well-publicized. Partnering organizations not only reap reputational acclaim but garner valuable organizational benefits. Membership within successful partnerships would undoubtedly be considered a competitive advantage, yet several of these successful relationships have chosen to forgo this valuable position. Instead of retaining intellectual property, partnering organizations are sharing successful processes and practices with peers and competitors. This research examined three examples of best practice cross-sector partnerships to identify relationship success factors, how they involved other organizations and why they shared successful social responsibility initiatives with others.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, cross-sector partnerships, nonprofit

Introduction

There are many motives for entering into a relationship with an organization from another sector. Such motives define the rationale for private sector involvement in societal issues and determine the level of commitment an organization is prepared to invest. While some relationships are based on a simple philanthropic exchange between a for-profit organization (FPO) and a nonprofit organization (NPO), others are deeply integrated and exhibit higher levels of commitment, engagement and interaction between partners (Austin, 2000a, 2000b). Those FPOs enacting their social responsibility agendas through partnering with NPOs may find exponential value in integrative (or social) partnerships (Austin, 2000a, 2000b; Berger, Cunningham & Drumwright, 2007). Such social partnerships encourage sectors to share resources, knowledge and skills as they work towards societal issue resolution.

Social partnerships, through cross-sector collaboration, produce important societal value through initiatives that raise awareness, encourage positive behavior and invest in solutions. Such partnerships are applauded as necessary intervention where the public sector has failed, or requires assistance, to meet social and environmental needs (Austin, 2000a, 2000b; Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Waddock, 1988). Investment in societal issues, particularly towards those in which FPOs are aligned, or equipped to do so, can provide much needed solutions whilst presenting the FPO with a competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2006). If clear reputational advantages can be gained from the uniqueness of CSR initiatives (Porter & Kramer, 2006) enacted through cross-sector partnerships, it remains unclear why some FPOs would not only share information about successful initiatives, but invite other members of the private sector to participate to the point where the initiative is left unbranded.

This research first sought to examine the motivational drivers of social partnerships and how they aligned with the desire to be socially responsible, innovative or gain a competitive advantage. Furthermore, this research explored how such relationships evolved and achieved their well-publicized success. This paper addresses an unfamiliar notion whereby members of the private sector actively seek to involve other FPOs in their CSR programs and practice. In doing so, are these pioneering organizations losing their competitive advantage or is there more to be gained from sharing social responsibility best practice?

Data Collection

Three Australian-based case studies were purposefully selected for investigation based on information-oriented criteria which demonstrated maximum variation (Flyvbjerg, 2006). All involved members of the private and nonprofit sectors and had demonstrated success in cross-sector partnership implementation and achievement. Variation occurred in relation to the social issue they were targeting plus the duration of the relationship. This ranged from two to 27 years at the time of interviews.

Following organizational consent, semi-structured interviews were held with representatives of all core

organizations; including top level management, middle management and employees who performed in a variety of roles. Only participants able to offer a retrospective account or able to provide supportive evidence of their respective partnership's formation or evolution were included in the interview schedule. As partnerships' evolved so too did the number of additional partners; as such, several additional partner organizations were included in the interview schedule. In total 38 semi-structured interviews were held across the three cases. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency of themes and questions.

Background documentation including organization web pages, annual reports, sustainability reports and, publications documenting historical information were used to support evidence gained through interviews. Such secondary information was used to further triangulate data (Yin, 2003). Data were coded and contrasted against theories pertaining to collaboration including CSR.

Discussion

Many motives were sought and realized for the three cases involved in this research. This paper focuses on four critical core motives; employee engagement, access and insight into new markets, significant social value and, resource dependency.

Firstly, the desire to obtain a competitive advantage was aligned to the motive, 'employee engagement', whereby companies sought to provide opportunities for staff to become involved in activities harboring social value. The value in providing such opportunities is supported by literature whereby motivation, morale, retention and recruitment are improved (Austin, 2000a; Berger, Cunningham & Drumwright, 2006; Cardskadden & Lober, 1998; Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Samu & Wymer, 2001).

A second motive, 'access and insight into new markets', also complemented the desire to obtain competitive advantage. Whether this improves the level of awareness of a societal issue or extends the market reach for an organization, this strengthens an organization's visibility (Austin, 2000a; Kanter, 1999; Rondinelli & London, 2002; Samu & Wymer 2001; Van Huijstee, Francken & Leroy, 2007).

Common to all cases was the third, broader motive to create 'significant social value'. Statements such as "*you have to think about how you are assisting the communities that you work in*" (FPO a) and, "*I think [FPO b] genuinely wants to help the community that it operates in...we want to do something that makes a difference*" (FPO b), represented those interviewed about the genuine desire to 'give back' (FPO c) to the communities in which they operated. Such views were corroborated by organizational vision statements. This evidence supported the rationale that organizations were involved because they had a genuine desire to be socially responsible.

The fourth common motive, 'resource dependency', provided an insight into determining why organizations were prepared to forgo the competitive advantage of being uniquely associated with these innovative initiatives. The partnership process itself promotes resource sharing, with each sector inputting some form of organizational value ranging from knowledge and skills to financial investment (Googins & Rochlin, 2000; Waddock, 1991). Sharing resources to innovatively and adequately address societal problems was recognized by all sectors.

Once operational as partnership initiatives, those addressing societal problems were expanded or replicated to achieve additional success; such progression reinforces Glasbergen's (2007) literature on scaling-up. Additional partners were invited to participate which subsequently extended available resources for partnership initiatives. Multiple partners sharing resources thereby creates a sustainable platform for a CSR initiative to succeed. Thus, the invitation of new partners becomes an essential mechanism to partnership growth; collectively the expanding network creates an expansive solution.

Far from losing their competitive edge, several organizational benefits were revealed from inclusivity. In particular, organizations are positioned as leaders in best practice and strengthen their internal and external reputations. It can therefore be hypothesized from the findings of this research that there are clear reputational advantages to sharing successful initiatives that outweigh 'uniqueness'. Additionally, there is reduced NPO dependency on a sole FPO through inclusivity. Multiple FPO partners also provide an opportunity for the original FPO to withdraw and seek an alternate portfolio, allowing contribution to resolve other societal issues.

In conclusion, CSR programs and the underlying ethical values that drive organizations, regardless of sector, to become involved in large scale social initiatives cannot be isolated to a single motive such as maintaining a social

licence to operate or to achieve competitive advantage. Instead, this research provided important insights into the complexity of motives and values that drive organizations towards collaboration and inclusivity. Rather than single organizations assume sole responsibility to find solutions, resource sharing, through expansive and evolving cross-sector partnerships, provides a more efficient model to enact positive societal change.

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Public Relations as Expectation Management?

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Abstract

Publics of today have the means to combine powers and voice opinions through various channels online and offline. This calls for organizations that are sensitive towards these messages. Though expectations have a role in issues management, relationship management, reputation and risk studies, dynamics of expectations as signals for future behavior have not been discussed in great depth. This paper presents four different levels where expectations form, and suggests that expectation management is a central task for future PR. Moreover, expectation management is seen as a strategic tool where 'management' refers to organizations' own ability to interpret the expectations they face.

Keywords: Expectations, expectation management, weak signals

Introduction

The information flows that prevail today are instant and potentially global (Coombs, 2002). This has introduced organizations with new challenges, especially as publics have the means and knowledge to combine powers and voice opinions through multifaceted and interconnected channels online and offline (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Shirky, 2008). Reacting to publics is not enough, as organizations should recognize weak signals before they turn into generally accepted demands or standards (Luoma-aho, 2008; Olkkonen & Luoma-aho, 2011). Organizations are no longer at the center of the stakeholder map but parts of interconnected networks (Luoma-aho & Vos, 2010; Steurer, 2006), with a need to be sensitive to the changes in the network in terms of practices, values and expectations – a timely need recognized also by PR professionals in The Stockholm Accords (2010). In other words, the proactivity and receptivity are emphasized (Kent, Taylor & Veil, 2011). In order to respond to these challenges, more sophisticated mapping and monitoring are called for, as well as a deeper understanding of the changes that are taking place in the minds and emotional responses of publics.

To address this need this paper asks whether expectations can be the key to understanding the relationships publics form with organizations, and especially changes that take place in these relationships. The paper introduces what can be learned from studying expectations on different levels in multi-stakeholder settings. Namely, the paper presents four different expectation types and looks into expectation management as an emerging central task for PR in the future.

Expectations' Role in PR

Public relations as a field is interested in publics, their actions, and their opinions that form through evolving trends, issues and values (Dozier, 1986; Lauzen, 1995). The Stockholm Accords (2010) of Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management note that public relations and communication professionals should "*[i]nterpret societal expectations for sound economic, social and environmental commitments that yield a return to the organization and society*" (Stockholm Accords, 2010, p. 6), though yet not enough is known about how and why expectations matter for PR. Expectations are often mentioned along with other factors organizations should try to identify and monitor, such as attitudes, values and norms (Grunig et al., 1992; Heath & Bowen, 2002; Ledingham, 2003). Yet the actual dynamics of expectations that guide publics' assessments have received little scholarly attention in PR and communication studies to date.

What makes expectations interesting for PR is that they contribute to publics' assessments and perceptions (Creyer & Ross, 1997), leading eventually to behavioral responses (Boulding, Kalra & Zeithaml, 1993). Expectations have had a role in theories such as issues management (Heath & Bowen, 2002), relationship management (Ledingham, 2003), and reputation management (Eisenegger & Imhof, 2008), where expectations have been mentioned as factors that organizations should keep track of when they try to stay on track of their

changing environments. Furthermore, theories such as risk management have noted expectations as elements that contribute to evaluations (Williams, Brown, Greenberg & Kahn, 1999). In the current environment where publics are less dependent on organizations as well as inventive in finding ways to influence organizations (de Bakker & den Hond, 2008; Shirky, 2011), PR needs to upgrade the tools it has when it comes to learning about publics and what influences their behavior. Dialogue (Heath & Bowen, 2002, p. 237) and engagement (Bruning, Dials & Shirka, 2008) have been suggested to be the key for finding mutual benefit and understanding, but this paper suggests that expectation management might be something that precedes both and gives them focus.

Though scholars of PR and organizational communication have not theorized expectations to a great extent, customer management and customer satisfaction (see eg. Creyer & Ross, 1997; Summers & Cranbois, 1977) are areas to look into when trying to fill this gap. Though this area of research focuses on marketing, it also deals with the psychology of evaluations, satisfaction and dissatisfaction that can be further utilized in a much broader context than only customers. This background has been used in the study that is described next.

Learning from different expectation types

To tap into the roots and dynamics of expectations, this section presents some of the most relevant findings from a study where one industry in particular, the media industry, was researched from a multi-stakeholder perspective. The industry was approached from different angles through interviewing various publics to reveal how expectations affect organizational relations and how meeting them or failing them might contribute to organizational success.

By studying the relationships different groups have with the industry and organizations that form it, it was possible to distinguish between different types of expectations, all of which relate to certain areas on the organizational agenda. Drawing from previous theory of expectation types (mainly from customer management and customer satisfaction literature, see eg. Miller, 1977; Summers & Granbois, 1977), four different types of expectations were recognized in the study: 'must', 'will', 'should' and 'could' expectations (Tolvanen, Olkkonen & Luoma-aho, forthcoming). The four expectations are very different from each other, as a must expectation, for example describes what is considered as the very minimum level of acceptance, whereas a will expectation is a predictive assessment based on probability. Table 1 summarizes the expectation types and makes suggestions for their relevance for PR.

TABLE 1
Different expectation types

Expectation type	Description	Influence on relationship	Relevance for PR
Must	Anticipation based on *acceptability* on the minimum level	Fulfilled must expectations sets the base for relationship-building in terms of basic trust and legitimacy	Deals with minimum acceptability; gaps can cause problems for legitimacy
Will	Anticipation based on *probability* on a realistic level	Fulfilled will expectations can affect the relationship both positively and negatively, depending on whether the expectation itself is positive (optimistic) or negative (pessimistic).	Deals with realistic assessments; positive expectations contributes to organizational assets such as reputation capital only if met accordingly, negative expectations can be a sign of reputation loss
Should	Anticipation based on *hopes* and *wishes* on a normative level	Fulfilled should expectations is a sign that the relationship is developing as desired and it is based on more than basic trust and legitimacy	Deals with values; gaps can indicate that organizational values do not meet publics' values, can cause problems for reputation or even legitimacy
Could	Anticipation based on *possibilities* on the ideal level	Fulfilled could expectations are a sign that the relationship is able to offer more than an average relationship	Deals with ideals; gaps that are responded to can be valuable when distinguishing from the competition

As expectations are formed on different levels, it is suggested that expectation management forms an important part of public relations today. As meant in this paper, expectations management does not refer to managing or

controlling publics' expectations, but rather to organization's ability to manage its own understanding of the expectations directed to it, especially in terms of different expectation levels and their differences in relevance, priority and criticality. It is suggested that misinterpreting expectations can lead to severe problems such as legitimacy gaps, if a must expectation is interpreted as a should expectation, for example. As such, PR should learn to recognize expectation types and gaps more promptly, as they are events where expectations and performance do not meet and possible problems arise.

Conclusion

Publics assess their relationships with organizations or the whole industry based on expectations that take place on different levels. Essentially, expectations shape relationships and the emotions connected to them. Therefore, it is suggested that PR professionals should understand expectations and their origins in order to be able to manage organizational relations and to improve organization's ability to keep on track of early signals that contribute to organizational success. Thus, expectation management could be an answer to this need, though it does not suggests that publics' expectations should or even could be controlled, but rather that organizations' own understanding of expectations needs a strategic approach that should be managed. Expectation management is suggested to include such tasks as interpreting the level of expectations, tracking of expectations gaps, and understanding the changes that take place on expectation levels or from one expectation to another. As such, expectation management can be a strategic tool for organizations wanting to succeed in an environment where the support of publics has never been a more important asset.

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Towards Effective Media Relations in a Changing Media Landscape in Singapore: Testing the Mediating the Media model

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Abstract

Media relations is a predominant PR function (Fawkes & Tench, 2005; Spicer, 1997; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009; Taylor, 2000). Pang's conceptual "Mediating the Media" model offers a systemic framework for cultivating media relations effectively. The model posits two sets of influences, i.e. internal (journalist mindset, journalist routines and newsroom routines) and external (extra-media forces and media ideology), that practitioners should seek to understand. Inaugural testing of the model in Singapore show that internal influences are more prevalent than external influences and that journalist mindset is the most pervasive factor influencing media relations.

Keywords: Public relations, Media Relations, Media, Journalism

Introduction

The bulk of PR work performed by practitioners revolves around media relations (Jo & Kim, 2004; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009; Tan, 2001). In Singapore, organizations focus excessively on media relations (Chay-Nemeth, 2003; Yeap, 1995; Yeo, 2008) with senior practitioners spending at least a third of their time on it (Yeo & Sriramesh, 2009).

Even though the advent of new media technologies and social media platforms are transforming how audiences consume content (Christ, 2007), in Singapore, mainstream media remains a key source of news and information (Lin, 2011; Oon, 2009; Posner, 2005), stressing the importance of media relations for organisations (Chay-Nemeth, 2009; Lim, Goh, & Sriramesh, 2005; Low & Kwa, 2005; Wee, Tan, & Chew, 1996). As newspaper readership is still relatively high in Singapore (MICA, 2012; Oon, 2009), traditional media maintains its influence on public opinion.

Despite its critical function, there appears to be a lack of a systemic framework to study media relations. Pang (2010) developed a journalist-centric media relations model. This study tests the viability of the Mediating the Media model in Singapore and ascertains its relevance to practitioners.

Mediating the Media Model

Pang's (2010) media relations model identifies internal and external influences. Internal influences include journalist mindsets, journalist routines, and newsroom routines. External influences include extra-media forces and media ideology.

Internal Influences

Journalist Mindset
Journalists are guided by traditional news values like immediacy, excitement, and novelty which assist them to sieve through the large volumes of information passing through the newsrooms daily (Chibnall, 1977; Sinaga & Wu, 2007). Practitioners with good news sense who can produce well-written press releases and pitches will gain journalists' attention (Sallot & Johnson, 2006).

Journalist Routines
Journalists appreciate qualities like timeliness, accessibility and transparency (Bagin & Fulginiti, 2005). Deadlines are a major consideration so journalists expect fast and succinct information (Richards, 1998; Yoon, 2005). Understanding this will enable practitioners to better meet the needs of journalists and earn their trust and respect (Ruff & Aziz, 2003; Yoon, 2005).

Newsroom or Organizational Routines
Media organisations fulfil specific roles and objectives. Ensuring profitability and sustainability, marketing, advertising and diversification also influence editorial decisions (Breed, 1955; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Budget and manpower constraints impact what news gets covered. During crunch periods, organisations are more likely to rely on practitioners for information

than conduct their own investigations (Cameron, Sallot, & Curtin, 1997; Sinaga & Wu, 2007). Practitioners who deliver information, footages and story ideas with minimal input from newsrooms will be able to maximise coverage for their organisations.

External Influences

Extra-media Forces
Extra-media forces include the existing relationships between organisations and media establishments, market forces, governmental regulations, legalities, size of the media industry and media competition (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Practitioners need to understand these larger forces at work and act accordingly.

Media Ideology
Ideology refers to media organisations' role in society and their reason for existence (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). In the US and UK, journalists consider themselves as the fourth pillar of democracy (Hearns-Branaman, 2011; Pfetsch, 2001) and they are protected by law while in China, a more submissive press system is in place (Merrill, 2000; Parsons, 1997). Understanding the media's role in a society will help practitioners navigate the media landscape better.

Testing the Mediating the Media model in Singapore

Given that engaging the media remains a paramount PR function in Singapore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions.
RQ1: How does the understanding of internal influences (i.e. journalist mindset, journalist routines and newsroom routines) affect media relations?
RQ2: How does the understanding of external influences (i.e. extramedia forces and media ideology) affect media relations?
RQ3: Which influences are the most influential and which the least influential in regards to media relations?
RQ4: How relevant and applicable is the "Mediating the media" model to practitioners?

Method

The qualitative method was employed as it is widely used in the field of social sciences (Berg, 2009). The in-depth interview method which is useful in exploratory research (Hill & White, 2000; White & Raman, 2000) will help to determine the viability of the Mediating the Media model though the collection of relevant and precise information from the participants (William & Cooper, 1999).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data comes from face-to-face interviews with 20 journalists-turned-practitioners. Practitioners with journalism experience are better at media relations (Sallot & Johnson, 2006; Sinaga & Callison, 2008), thus they are the best participants to test the rigor of this model. Interview questions were designed to explore the influences that affect media relations.

The interviewees' PR experience ranged from 1 to 17 years and for journalism, from 1 to 20 years. Thirty to 90 percent of their time was allocated to media relations. The data was analyzed using the general inductive approach which enabled the interview responses to be categorized into themes that emerged frequently (Thomas, 2006).

Preliminary Findings and Discussion

Internal Influences

Journalist Mindset
RQ1analyses how the understanding of internal influences (i.e. journalist mindset, journalist routines and newsroom routines) affects media relations. The findings showed that understanding the journalist's mindset plays a dominant role. Interviewees said that skilled practitioners understand the journalists' news values, could identify suitable content for specific beats and can contextualize information subsidies to attract the journalists' attention.

While the expectations of senior management on media coverage frequently ran contrary to news values, most practitioners mitigated this by identifying compelling news angles and shaping content in a newsworthy manner. Senior practitioners however, were able to turn some story ideas down, citing lack of news value. Some said that they spend up to 50 percent of their time making information subsidies attractive to the journalists by collating data, teaming up with research groups, conceiving video and picture opportunities and providing exclusive angles.

Journalist Routines

All interviewees said they were easily accessible to journalists but added that responding to media queries takes time. The availability of the newsmakers to whom the media queries are directed at is one reason for the delay in response. While newsroom deadlines were a consideration, practitioners were limited by their own organizational constraints. Therefore many interviewees did not regard newsroom deadlines as crucial because of the nature of the 24/7 news cycle. They felt that as newsrooms had several bulletins a day and provided updates on their websites, they sent out their responses as and when the information is available.

Newsroom or Organizational Routines

Knowing the organizational structure of the newsrooms was important and useful to the interviewees. On occasions where they did not agree with a reporter, they bypassed the journalist and consulted the supervising editor. Interviewees said that editors were able to see issues from a bigger perspective and often took a conciliatory tone especially with those senior practitioners who commanded respect among the editors.

Interviewees said that cultivating other newsroom contacts, besides journalists and editors, understanding news-production workflow and resource limitations were useful but not very crucial. Knowing what interests the journalists and providing beat-specific content has proven successful for them and enhanced their relationships with the journalists and editors.

External Influences

Extra-media Forces

RQ2 asks how understanding external influences (i.e. extramedia forces and media ideology) affects media relations. The interviewees regarded the nature and the size of the media industry as inconsequential. They felt that news entities in Singapore are too specialized to be involved in any meaningful competition. Legal considerations like the possibility of defamation suits, breaching confidentiality agreements (for example, customer confidentiality) and business regulations were deemed more important as the practitioners have to be constantly mindful of limitations unique to their specific industries.

Media Ideology

All interviewees had trouble with the notion of media ideology. In their view, journalism in Singapore is just another profession and not a vehicle for change. The interviewees said that journalists were generally non-aggressive, attributing this to the Singaporean way of working i.e. accommodating and non-questioning. OB markers were considered to be "common-sense" and accepted as the norm rather than a hindrance to media publicity.

External influences did not figure greatly in the scheme of things for the interviewees. The nature of the media industry, legalities and governmental regulations were considered as part of the social system and not something that was seen to be dynamic.

FIGURE 1

Hierarchy of Influence of media relations in Singapore in mediating the media model
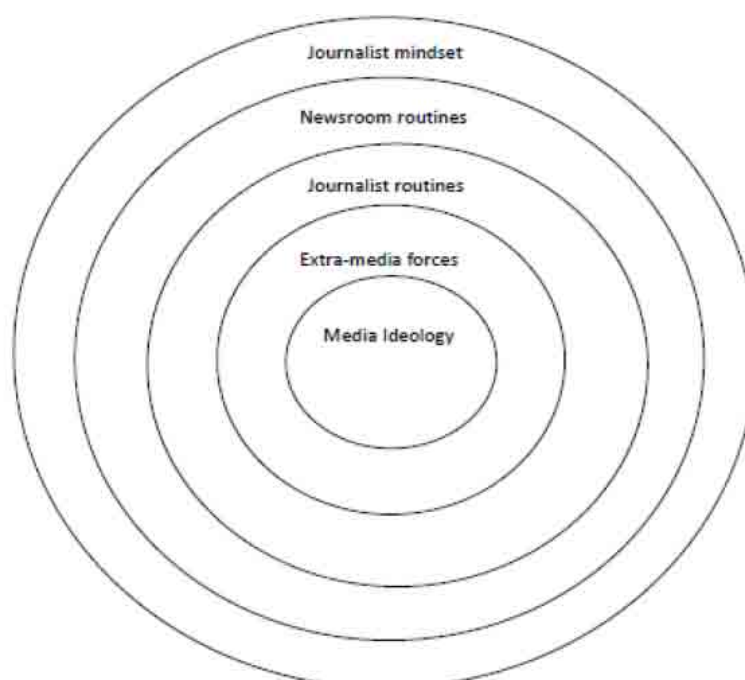
RQ3 asks how the influences are ordered in terms of their pervasiveness with regards to the cultivation of media relations. Internal influences were ranked as more pervasive than external influences. Among the internal influences, journalist mindset was the most pervasive followed by newsroom routines and journalist routines. Among the external influences, extra-media forces were deemed more pervasive than media ideology.

RQ4 ascertains how relevant and applicable the Mediating the Media model is to practitioners. The model was generally welcomed by the interviewees as a useful guide, especially for those who are new to public relations. Having a model will ease some apprehension of new practitioners about how to deal with journalists. Some of the senior practitioners were somewhat cynical about limiting the practice of media relations to an absolute model since it involves personalities and human behavior is dynamic. However, many agreed that having a model serves as a useful tool as it offers a systemic framework to approach media relations effectively.

Conclusion

This exploratory study is significant in several ways. By testing the viability of the model, we can ascertain the key factors that influence the working relationships between journalists and practitioners. The perspectives of former journalists who were knowledgeable in both PR and journalism added richness to the data by enhancing the understanding of the dynamics between the two groups of communication professionals (DeLorme & Fedler, 2003; Tilley & Hollings, 2008).

This study gives useful insights for new practitioners to approach media relations strategically and for seasoned practitioners, to re-evaluate their current media strategies. The influences may be ordered differently in other countries, like in China and the US where the media industries are large and operate under vastly different environments. Such cross-cultural studies will test if the Mediating the Media model can become a universal model for media relations.

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An indigenous approach to public relations in the Caribbean Energy Sector: Petrotrin waking to a changing world

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Abstract

Today's constantly connected world requires a strategic approach to public relations to ensure an organization's survival. This qualitative study examines developments at Trinidad and Tobago's state owned Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited as the organization moves from tactical to strategic public relations to meet the evolving needs of its publics. It will show how this organization, faced with unique constraints as a state-owned entity in a highly unionized environment, is finding a balance between traditional and new communication tools to strengthen stakeholder relationships and how its practices are influencing other companies in the energy industry.

Keywords: public relations, strategic communications, stakeholder engagement, reputation management, brand awareness, online collaboration

Introduction

One of the world's oldest energy industries with roots that can be traced back to 1866, Trinidad and Tobago is the Caribbean's leading energy province today. (www.eia.gov.) The national energy flagship company, Petroleum Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited (Petrotrin) plays a significant role in the energy sector as the nation's single largest oil producer. The company enjoys a rich history in the local energy sector and a longstanding relationship with consumers across the Caribbean region. (www.energy.gov.tt/content/Centenary_Pub_Petrotrin_Profile.pdf)

Over the years, Petrotrin has suffered from a poor public perception of its operations. Until recently, the company practiced a tactical, reactive approach to public relations and did not employ systematic strategies to acquire and measure data to inform its relationships with its publics or to analyze the effectiveness of the programs it supported. A few years ago, an unstructured approach to public relations was believed to be sufficient.

The world today demands a paradigm shift in the way business is conducted (Argenti and Barnes. 2009, p1). Transparency is expected, corporate behavior is under constant scrutiny and negative publicity could escalate into a crisis in minutes.

In today's society, organizations have found that a strategic approach to every facet of public relations is critical to their survival. Alsop (2004, p11) stated:

> A company's good name can be affected for better or worse every time a customer sees a company truck, makes a phone call to a corporate office, or signs on to its website.

The development of new media, with social media as a critical component of modern communication, has significantly impacted the business environment. This brings serious implications for brand reputation.

The Arthur W. Page Society (2007, p 6) refers to a rapidly changing business landscape influenced by:
- The emergence of a new digital information commons;
- The reality of a global economy; and
- The appearance and empowerment of myriad new stakeholders.

In this climate, incremental changes to public relations may not be enough, but will a drastic shift in communication strategies, eliminating all traditional modes of communications be effective in the energy sector?

This paper looks at the progress made by public relations professionals at Petrotrin as the organization seeks to modernize its approach to public relations and compares these developments with the latest industry texts and

recommendations. It will show how the marriage between traditional communication methods and new tools provide added opportunities to eliminate communication barriers between the industry and its publics, and how both methods can encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst professionals in the sector to secure its continued development in an evolving world without borders. It shows how Petrotrin's public relations can influence the strategies of other companies in the local energy sector as well as those of state owned entities as they straddle industry needs, Government requirements and internal and external expectations in a thrust to build and maintain progressive relationships.

Methodology

While some information was gathered from experiential knowledge, analytical research methods were preferred in this study. At the inception of the study and to establish a benchmark for public relations in the Caribbean industry, energy companies from throughout the country participated in a survey to measure their approaches to public relations. With a population of just over 67 active oil and gas operators targeted in the upstream and downstream energy sector in Trinidad and Tobago, 30 organizations participated in the study. Purposeful sampling was used to identify the energy companies invited to participate in the survey. At this stage, 150 persons were interviewed.

Companies participating in original survey
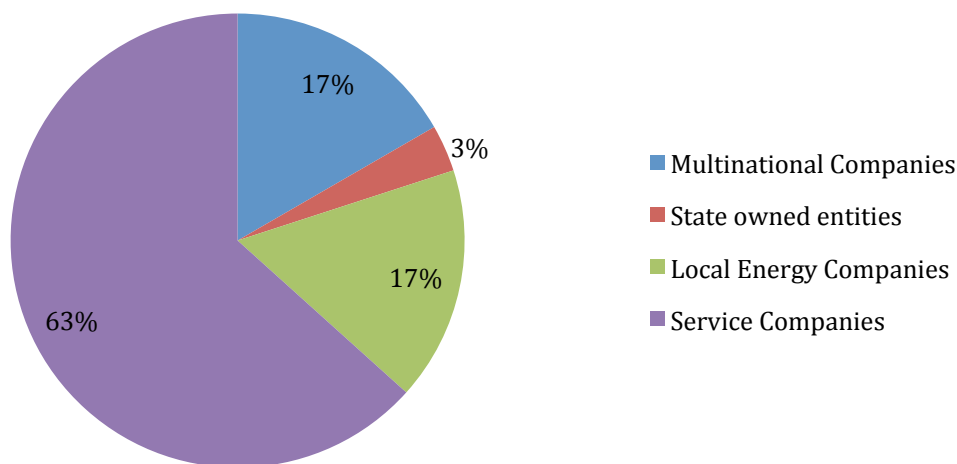
Following the preliminary stages, attention was turned to the local entities to develop a stronger understanding of the indigenous approach to public relations in the energy sector.

In the final stage, once the framework was established, research was conducted at Petrotrin and centered on the operations at this organization. Petrotrin was selected for its role as the largest local entity operating in the energy sector. Petrotrin is a major contributor to the national economy and the largest employer in the energy sector, providing direct employment to over 5,000 employees. The company also has a rich history dating back to the beginning of commercial oil production in Trinidad in 1903 and its operations are spread across the southwest peninsula, affecting communities in 13 constituencies. Petrotrin operates the single petroleum refinery in Trinidad and Tobago and is responsible for the most production in the Caribbean region. The intent was to identify the ways Petrotrin structured its approach to public relations to provide a framework which could inform other indigenous operators in the energy sector. At this stage, interviews were conducted with internal and external stakeholders. A total of 500 persons were interviewed.

Primary data was gathered from personal interviews, telephone interviews and by questionnaires. Interviews were semi-structured. To compare developments with the latest industry recommendations, secondary data was collected by library research and included the analysis of books, reports, previous research and other documents available in the public domain, both online and in print.

Findings

According to the findings of this study, Petrotrin's choice to take an incremental approach to public relations are not yet aligned with the latest recommendations which calls for drastic changes to adjust to the digital revolution. The company's strategy however, though not subscribing to textbook recommendations, appears to be best aligned to the local industry and the company's unique audiences. Face to face and word of mouth interactions continue to hold precedence with a significant portion of its publics. The study identified corporate social responsibility as the driving factor that is impacting public relations in developing communities in Trinidad and Tobago.

With Petrotrin servicing a regional and international market and soliciting investments from an international audience, the study found that the company did not strategically factor its digital reputation into its public relations strategies so that Petrotrin's approach to relationship management and brand reputation online was not consistent with the strategic goal of the organization. The study found that Petrotrin's approach to digital communications was consistent with the general approach by local energy companies to online communications, reputation monitoring and management.

The company's cautious entry onto social media platforms has helped to open relationships with new connected demographic, reaching audiences around the world, however, in the local energy industry there has not been a significant adoption among older, professional groups.

Petrotrin, though developing strategies to connect with its internal audiences, continues face low employee morale and has not managed to convert employees into proactive corporate ambassadors as recommended by the latest pr texts.

Research Limitations

Obstacles to securing the information required for the study included the time available to conduct interviews and collate the information required. Further research factoring in the initiatives of the other energy companies regionally can also provide quality information that could determine the transferability of these findings and inform the overall development of our indigenous approach to public relations in the Caribbean region.

Discussion and Conclusion

The challenges experienced by PETROTRIN in managing public relations as a state-owned enterprise in Trinidad and Tobago or as a local entity in the energy sector are not new. This has long been discussed and the need to develop a strategic approach to implementing programs has been previously identified and consistently supported by previous studies. This study reinforces previous research in this regard.

This study has however identified that while industry recommendations point to a future that is already beginning to impact energy companies in the Caribbean region, a complete transition may not have the positive impact desired. PETROTRIN, whose operations impact directly upon several communities in Southern Trinidad and the national community, must therefore in developing a strategic approach to public relations, must continue to manage traditional and new approaches for optimal results. There are some opportunities

PETROTRIN, currently faced with an aging workforce, is also presented with an opportunity to use new media, including social media, to aid with collaboration, knowledge sharing and the development of professional networking relationships targeting the sustained development of the sector.

The company's approach to managing brand management on the internet, including social media, must be adjusted in short time. While the company may face unique constraints in terms of its day to day operations, it is

critical that the company adopt a consistent and strategic approach to managing and measuring its online communications as this is also a critical component affecting the company's reputation.

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Public relations practitioners and social media: themes in a global context

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Abstract

Social media has dramatically impacted the public relations industry in the last few years. Publics are increasingly geographically dispersed, traditional media and user-generated content are converging, and the discrete titles of 'consumer' and 'producer' often no longer apply. There is also a growing emphasis on social media as an effective vehicle for two-way symmetrical communication between practitioners and publics. However, it is too early to assume the public relations industry has become 'borderless'. Research suggests practitioners around the world are not necessarily having a mutual experience with social media. This paper reviews public relations literature on social media and examines common themes and experiences across borders, drawing on research with practitioners from the United States, the Middle East, Europe and Asia-Pacific. Specifically, this paper addresses adoption rates, social media platforms used, type of communication and governance, highlighting differences that exist in practitioner (and organisational) experience, preparedness and approach to social media.

Keywords: Social media, public relations

Social media adoption

Research suggests the rate of social media adoption by public relations practitioners is highest in the United States; DiStaso, McCorkindale and Wright (2011) recently reported that 91% of the practitioners in their study had used social media in the past year. These figures reinforce those by Wright and Hinson (2010) who found 96% of practitioners spend some time working with social media. Meanwhile, lower adoption rates are common in the rest of world. In the Middle East, Avidar (2009) found social media adoption to be on the rise in Israel, with 78% of practitioners experimenting with at least one social media element. In Europe, Zerfass, Fink and Linke (2011a) reported that 54% of 1007 organisations took advantage of social media as a communication channel, while in Turkey, Alikilic and Atabek (2012) found that only 14.6% of practitioners used social networks as part of their practice. In the Asia-Pacific, Macnamara (2010a; 2011b) discovered relatively high adoption rates. However, when looking at a specific Australian region, Robson and James (2011) found that while 86% of public relations practitioners had used social media, only 11.6% of those respondents could be classified as active users. This suggests a possible disconnect between reporting adoption rates of practitioners who have used social media at one point in time, compared to those who actively use social media on an ongoing basis.

Social media platforms

The most popular social media platforms amongst public relations practitioners are blogs, social networks and micro-blogging. In the United States, Gillin (2008) and DiStaso and Bortree (2012) found blogging to be the most used social media platform amongst practitioners. Avidar (2009) experienced similar results in Israel with 80% using blogs and 69% using social networks. Other researchers from the United States (Wright & Hinson, 2011) and Europe (Michaelidou, Siamagka, & Christodoulides, 2011; Verhoeven, Tench, Zerfass, Moreno, & Verčič, 2012) found social networks such as Facebook to be the platform most used by public relations practitioners. Microblogging sites such as Twitter were also popular in the United States. DiStaso and Bortree (2012) found Twitter featured 50% of the time in award winning campaigns, ahead of Facebook (32%). Sweetser and Kelleher (2011) found 100% of their sample had used Twitter within a week of the survey taking place. Video and photo sharing were also commonly used in the United States (Curtis et al.,

2010; Lariscy, Avery, & Sweetser, 2009), Israel (Avidar, 2009) and Europe (Verhoeven et al., 2012). Asia-Pacific practitioners preferred social networks, microblogging, and video sharing as their go-to social media platforms, with the most popular sites listed as LinkedIn, Facebook, and YouTube (Macnamara, 2011a).

Social media governance

Research addressing social media governance showed scholars generally agreeing that social media governance consisted of guidelines, monitoring, measuring and training (Macnamara, 2011a; Zerfass et al., 2011a; Zerfass, Verhoeven, Tench, Moreno, & Verčič, 2011b). Governance is gaining prominence in the literature due to the nature of social media; information can be communicated by anyone and travel globally within minutes. Additionally, the fear of losing control of information and the possibility of crises are consistently rated by practitioners as major challenges in adopting social media in their organisations (DiStaso et al., 2011; Macnamara, 2010a; Robson & James, 2011; Verhoeven et al., 2012). While it is mistaken to suggest governance frameworks can enable an organisation to control communication via social media, policies, procedures and prior training are invaluable during issues and crises.

Despite a governance focus, research from Europe, the United States and Asia-Pacific shows few organisations with a comprehensive governance framework. Zerfass et al. (2011a) found 83.9% of German organisations had weak regulatory structures, Wright and Hinson (2010) found 46% of organisations had never conducted monitoring or measurement of external publics in social media, and Macnamara (2011b) found more than 65% of Asia-Pacific organisations without specific social media guidelines. Similarly, Verhoeven et al. (2012) found only one-third of European communication professionals have organisational social media guidelines and a similar number undertake monitoring of social media channels. The only exception was Israel where 95% of PR practitioners surveyed tracked online mentions of their clients (Avidar, 2009). In Singapore, respondents in Fitch's (2009a) study felt that social media measurement was limited and usually descriptive rather than an true evaluation of effectiveness. Training and resource allocation also did not seem to be a priority for organisations, with practitioners in all regions perceiving themselves as underprepared in terms of social media skills (Avidar, 2009; Fitch, 2009b; IBM, 2011; Lariscy et al., 2009; Macnamara, 2011a; Zerfass et al., 2011a). This research suggests in practice, organisations with comprehensive frameworks addressing guidelines and policies, monitoring of channels, measurement indicators and training of staff are still in the minority.

Models of communication

Studies concerned with communication via social media tended to be practitioners self-reporting via surveys and interviews or content analyses of social media activity using Kent and Taylor's (1998) dialogic principles (e.g. Bortree & Seltzer, 2009). Regardless, around the world, academics and practitioners claim that social media provides an ideal platform for dialogue, collaboration and building relationships with publics (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Estanyol, In press; Evans, Twomey, & Talan, 2011; Grunig, 2009; Macnamara, 2010b). Despite this, there is little evidence to show that social media platforms are being used in a manner conducive to two-way, symmetrical communication. Studies across the globe found social media was primarily being used for message dissemination, and practitioners failed to make use of the platforms' dialogic properties. Both Bortree and Seltzer (2009) and Waters, Burnett, Lamm and Lucas (2009) found non-profit groups failed to make use of dialogue and interaction on Facebook, instead relying on traditional one-way messaging strategies. Similar outcomes were evident in a more recent study on Twitter (Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012).

A few studies have found evidence of relationship building and collaboration via social media; however, some of the results were inconclusive. Macnamara (2010a) queried his interviewees' commitment to dialogic communication, saying, "this finding is considered questionable and suggests rhetoric within public relations unmatched by practice, based other information provided in this research and the findings of other studies" (p. 32). This suggestion of 'rhetoric' is supported by his later findings that only 40.6% of practitioners in

Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong used social media for research and listening, and 20.3% for collaboration (Macnamara, 2011a). The idea of 'rhetoric' was also present in Evans et al.'s (2011) study of Twitter use in the top 50 US public relations firms. Again, interviewees emphasised relationship-building, yet "...respondents pointed out that they were offering advice based on their opinion of how Twitter functions successfully and not how their firms currently employ the tool" (Evans et al., 2011, p. 15). This suggests it is much easier to say than do. The only claim of effective two-way communication and relationship building came from Briones, Kuch, Liu and Jin's (2011) study of American Red Cross. However, this study relied on employee interviews and not analysis of social media activity by the organisation, therefore it is difficult to determine if this is yet another example of 'rhetoric'.

Finally, much of the research focus to date has been on organisational activity, with only a few reception studies (e.g. Austin, Fisher Liu, & Jin, 2012; Dodd & Campbell, 2011; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011). This gap suggests directions for future research.

Conclusion

Public relations scholars are striving to attain both understanding and clarity regarding the use of social media in the industry. The research discussed herein shows the depth and breadth of research being undertaken, and while the adoption rates, platforms favoured and level of experience may differ, this review suggests practitioners are also facing common challenges in using social media. Themes of dialogue, control, governance, and measurement dominate the literature. Internationally, practitioners appear to be struggling with a perceived loss of control over messages and lack experience using dialogical approaches with their publics.

While this paper does not aim to solve the challenges and answer the multitude of questions surrounding social media use in public relations practice, its objective in reviewing current literature is to provide both scholars and practitioners with an overview of the current research and an insight into the present global position of social media in the industry.

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Information seeking in a disaster

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Abstract

This paper addresses the gaps in knowledge about how people get information in a disaster and what they want to know. The rapidly changing information landscape has also made this study timely. This research considers information seeking pathways, according to the framework developed by Savolainen (1995; 2008), and sources during the impact and dislocation periods of a disaster. Interviews were conducted in four Australian communities that experienced slow flood, flash flood, bushfire or cyclone within the 12 months before the study began. 51 people were interviewed and were asked how they heard about the disaster, where they then went for more information, what their most used source of information was and what type of information they were seeking. Interviews were conducted between October 2010 and August 2011. From the interview analysis, a survey was developed. The survey was implemented online using Survey Monkey, and a link to the survey was distributed online using convenience sampling and placement of information about the survey in a number of fora. In addition, 2000 copies of the surveys were letterbox dropped in Queensland. Interview participants made up a small sample, skewed toward regional areas. They were selected by convenience sampling. In the interviews, disadvantaged demographics (ie those with lower levels of education or income, or the disabled), people aged 18-25 and multicultural populations were under-represented. It is hoped that the survey will correct this.

Keywords: flood, bushfire, cyclone, radio, information-seeking, information source, social media, communication, emergency, disaster.

Background

On December 17, 2009, a fire started at the rubbish tip at Walla Walla, 30kms north of Albury, NSW. It was a high fire danger day at 37 degrees Celsius, 10% humidity and winds of 45-60kph and the fire made its way south east to the community of Gerogery, traveling 11kms in one hour (Alexander 2010). Five homes were destroyed, 5,500ha were burnt, a large number of cattle and sheep lost and two firefighters injured ('Fire whirl: The startling Riverina bushfires' 2010).

In south western Queensland, the Balonne and Moonie River systems flooded in March 2010. The flood particularly affected the Balonne Shire community where the Balonne River peaked at 13.28m at St George on March 6 (Norman 2010). Twenty houses were inundated and the hospital and aged care home evacuated.

Just over two weeks later on Saturday, March 21, category 3 Cyclone Ului crossed the coast at Airlie Beach, passing directly over the town at 1.30am (Bureau of Meteorology 2010). About 30 homes and buildings were damaged, 60,000 households were left without power.

In 2011, a wet summer followed by a heavy rain period resulted in dramatic flash flooding through the mountain city of Toowoomba in Queensland on January 10. Two people died when their car was washed away from a major intersection, and the world saw dramatic water rescues of other people (Holmes, Sullivan & Cummins 2011, pp. 26, 230).

The population of the predominantly agricultural Balonne Shire, in which St George is the major centre, is 4,627 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007a). The farming community of Gerogery has a population of 979 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007b). Airlie Beach is a tourist town and has a population of 2,751 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007c). Toowoomba has a population of 95,000 people and is an education, health and agricultural centre for the lower portion of western Queensland (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010). The breakdown of interviews was: St George 13, Airlie Beach 11, Gerogery 13 and Toowoomba 14.

Findings – where people found information

The type of disaster determines how both how people first hear about the disaster and how they then seek information.

Bushfire

At Gerogery, the most prevalent primary source of information was other people on mobile of fixed line phone, followed by visuals (seeing the smoke). All of those interviewed at Gerogery checked the smoke regularly during the course of the disaster. Every interviewee contacted other people for information and to pass on information. Nine of the interviewees did not listen to radio at all. Four people turned eventually to radio, listening to ABC local radio, Radio 104.9 and 2AY. Each commented on the inaccuracy of the geographic information and/or the lack of currency of information.

Of the people interviewed, only people in the unaffected Gerogery West area received the automated text/phone messages.

The predominant source at any stage of the fire was friends, family and neighbours with every respondent mentioning such contact in their information seeking pathway. Four interviewees commented that they were too busy defending their property to be actively looking for information but that people rang them on mobiles and from those calls they received a form of update.

Cyclone

The largest group of interviewees at Airlie Beach first heard about the cyclone via radio, although this was just over one third of the group. The Bureau of Meteorology was a critical source of information for many of the interviewees from Airlie Beach before the cyclone, with radio becoming the preferred source for ongoing information, particularly post-impact.   Radio selection at Airlie Beach was predominantly ABC local radio and SEA FM, evenly spread between respondents.

Information seeking at Airlie Beach stopped either when the power went out late on Saturday March 21 or when radio stations stopped giving live bulletins late at night. Information seeking generally started again the next morning after interviewees had looked around outside after the impact. From that time, radio was the most popular source and those that used radio commented that reporters on the ground and call-ins from people around the area gave them the most valuable information that allowed them to construct a picture of the damaged area and then put into context some time frames for restoration to normality.

Slow flood

In St George, people first heard about the flood from a number of sources but because it was a long expected event, could not remember which source they first heard about it from. Many realised that the river would flood as they saw the water get higher or heard of more rain in upper catchments, then sought information from other people and personal agency contacts, and returned to those sources for regular updates. Agency sources were reported by four people as their confirmation point and six interviewees used agency sources as a constant source. Other people were also a constant source.

As with the bushfire, visuals were an important confirmation tool during slow moving flood. ABC local radio was the main secondary source, although five of those who used radio commented that it was either behind the times or concentrating on the Balonne River with no news of the Moonie. For those isolated from St George but still on the Balonne River, the ABC was an important source of information, particularly those without power.

A number of people reported seeing or hearing of a flood map distributed by Balonne Shire Council. The map was helpful and seemed to contribute to the need for visual confirmation that emerged as a theme across all four disasters.

Flash flood

In the flash flood, the majority of interviewees (10) first heard about the flood from friends, family, neighbours or work colleagues via landline, mobile phone and social media and the remainder learned about it from television news. Once interviewees had learned of the flood, television was key to understanding what happened, but unlike the other disasters, their main source changed after about 24 hours because of the repetition of information coming from television and in some cases, the discovery of official social media sites. Main sources became more diverse - websites, radio, social media and other people.

Findings – what people were looking for

The types of information people sought was similar across disaster types. Information about the event, where it was and when it would peak/hit/reach the interviewees was the most prevalent, followed by information about the safety of family and friends. However, other themes emerged within this category including location of safe places, road closures, how workplaces fared, when the power would be back on, when other places would peak (in the case of a flood).

Table 1 - Information sought

Disaster type	Information sought
Cyclone – pre-impact	Track of the cyclone, category, wind speeds, crossing location (4) Checking on friends and family (5) Responding to concern of friends and family (5)
Cyclone post-impact	When the power would be back on (3) Getting post-cyclone supplies and equipment (6) When airport would be operating (2) Damage information (7) How friends, family, neighbours and work had fared (7)
Slow-moving flood	Flood peak information (12) Information from neighbouring towns and close by rivers (2) What the flood peak information meant for the individual (what's going to happen) (1)
Bushfire	Where the fire was and where it was going (7) Whether family and friends were OK (3) Where there was somewhere safe to evacuate to (1) Road closures (1)
Flash flood	What happened (15) Whether family and friends were OK (7) Road closure information (3)

Practical implications

Word of mouth needs to be tapped into by agencies with mobile phone networks critical to this. Radio should be more proactively used and maps should be a feature of flood communications. Social media may be more accepted and should grow in importance as a source, particularly in disasters since the January 2010 floods in Queensland.

The focus of disaster communication research has been on the individual's use of single information sources such as mainstream media or social media, or how agencies have communicated rather than looking at the suite of information sources used. From this research, agencies should be able to develop effective communication strategies.

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Toward A Cultural Values Model of Public Relations: A Philippine Case Study

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Abstract

Using the circuit of culture model, this paper examines the construction of meaning and the cultural context of a public relations campaign in contemporary Philippine society and in a globalized world. It subscribes to the idea of the potential role of PR practitioners as cultural intermediaries (Curtin & Gaither, 2005; Hodges, 2006). By anchoring this work on the circuit of culture model, it follows the basic assumption that producers and consumers of media products and PR campaigns are engaged in dynamic meaning-making that is context-specific and is constantly changing as it is negotiated over time. The model-driven conceptual analysis is aimed at distilling the cultural forces that promote or constrain Philippine strategic communication programs. In addition, the study explores how elements of colonial history possibly embedded in cultural values are made manifest in public relations. The knowledge gained from the study will contribute to the literature in international and global public relations and more specifically in the area of cultural approaches to public relations.

Keywords: PR Philippines and Culture, Gawad Kalinga, PR Circuit of Culture

Circuit of Culture Model

Since public relations involve communication, it influences and is influenced by culture. In fact, the intersection of culture and PR, both at the macro (societal) and micro (organizational, interpersonal) level, has been explored by a number of scholars (Bardhan & Weaver, 2011; Curtin & Gaither, 2007; Sison, 2009; Sriramesh, 2007; Sriramesh & Takasaki, 1999; Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009; Rhee, 1999, 2002; Huang 2000, Culbertson & Chen, 1996; van Ruler & Vercic, 2004).

The central premise of the circuit of culture model is the primacy of power in relationships and the convergence of culture, knowledge and power. The circuit has the following nodes where meaning is created: representation, production, consumption, identity and regulation (du Gay, Hall, James, Mackay, & Negus, 1997). To provide alternative pathways for theory building in PR that "reflect its wide range of actual applications and cultural contexts and not just privilege Western, corporate settings," Curtin & Gaither (2005: 96) articulated the modeling of the circuit of culture in public relations.

The discursive process of manufacturing and shaping cultural meaning is called representation. "We give things meaning by how we represent them (Hall, 1997: 3). Production, on the other hand, refers to meanings associated with products or in the case of PR the messages strategically crafted for targeted publics. Consumption is where meaning is fully realized "because meaning does not reside in an object but in how that object is used" (Baudrillard, 1988: 101). Meanings derived through the production and consumption process form identities which are at once malleable, fragmented and complex as they include subjective and socially-developed constructs such as class, gender, ethnicity, etc. Finally, regulation comprises the formal and informal cultural control mechanisms that run the gamut of legal, technological, institutional, socioeconomic, religious and political systems.

The circuit of culture framework has been applied and extended to examine the closure of Starbucks in Beijing (Han & Zhang, 2009); Napster (Taylor et al, 2002) and the Adidas 'Beat Rugby' campaign (Scherer, 2007), to name a few. Goggin (2006) used the model to advance understanding of cell phones as cultural artifacts. With the model as the analytical framework, Terry (2005) reported on culture and PR in Kazakhstan.

The model is not without its critics and has been called a "little more than metaphor" (Fine 2002: 106). This paper, however, aligns itself with the view that PR is a ritual or a cultural form which is "synergistic, nonlinear and dynamic" (Curtin & Gaither 2005: 93). As such it departs from the "empirical-administrative tradition" (Dozier & Lauzen, 2000) and broadens the analytical spectrum to the larger social, cultural and political contexts of PR as it is practiced in the Philippines and at a particular juncture in the country's history and lived experience.

Methodology

Employing the case study approach, this article is an in-depth analysis of the *Gawad Kalinga* program. Based on published data, media and other institutional reports as well as interviews, the case study uses the five elements of the circuit of culture model as both analytical and organizing principles. *Gawad Kalinga* was chosen because the program spans domestic and cross-national borders and therefore provides a rich multi-layered site for cultural production.

Case Study

Gawad Kalinga or GK (Filipino for "to give care") is a community-building, humanitarian movement that started in 1995. GK aims to eradicate poverty through volunteerism following the Filipino *bayanihan*[9] way. From its early beginnings as an out-of-school youth intervention program run by a Catholic group, Couples for Christ, GK evolved as a secular foundation that builds homes and communities and include livelihood programs with a mission to "end poverty for five million Filipino families by 2024" (GK Website). Combining infrastructure, capacity development and public-private partnerships its program is implemented in 2000 communities in the Philippines as well as in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Cambodia.

The application of the circuit of culture model in analyzing *Gawad Kalinga* reveals the importance of understanding cultural values in communication campaigns. While GK started as a local community development project by a religious group, it developed to a national and global program that shows the interplay of culture, religion and communities in generating meaningful social change in the Philippines.

Regulation

The moment of regulation in the Philippine context reflects the process taken by the GK founders. Philippine culture is complex with its 350 years of Spanish colonial history and 50 years of American rule. Eighty percent of its population is Catholic and the Catholic Church is the country's most trusted institution (Philippine Trust Index 2011). However its American-styled government and robust free press have not curtailed corruption, which has impeded the country's progress. In 2006, 44% of its population or 40 million Filipinos lived below \$2.00/day[10]. About 20% of its GDP come from remittances of overseas Filipino workers.

Aside from faith, Filipino culture is also characterized by strong families, which often include extended members, who live in the same house. With these in mind, GK tapped into the Filipino values of helpfulness, neighbourly care and cooperation and focused its messages on 'poverty alleviation with human dignity.'

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[9] *Bayanihan* is "a Filipino tradition wherein neighbors would help a relocating family by gathering under their house, and carrying it to its new location… a communal spirit that makes seemingly impossible feats possible through the power of unity and cooperation." *(http://vrplus.dswd.gov.ph/index.php/component/content/article/7-bayanihang-bayan-program-bbp-/11-what-is-bayanihan).* The word has roots in *bayan* (country) and when "i" is added, it becomes *bayani* (hero), the latter being what the volunteers become with their *padugo* (bloodletting) or selfless sharing of self, talent and/or resources.

[10] http://www.ausaid.gov.au/country/country.cfm?CountryID=31

Production

GK's vision expresses its approach -- empowering people with faith and patriotism by building a nation comprised of caring and sharing communities "dedicated to eradicate poverty and restore human dignity" (http://www.gk1world. com/NewOurVision). The use of the discourse of care is underpinned by the Filipinos' cultural values of *bayanihan* and allows the shift of responsibility from the government to the people. Communicating social development resonates loudly with various sectors of society, and encourages public-private partnerships. To meet its national and international ambitions GK, however, had to deal with questions raised by the Catholic hierarchy about some of its partnerships.

Consumption

The 2007 separation from its original Catholic group paved the way for GK to expand its programs and consequently its funding sources. Apparently its Catholic roots and evangelical strategy was turning away potential volunteers and financiers and limiting its ability to become global. Following the split founder Tony Meloto said:

> GK is non-partisan. We do not take any side in building a nation in the same manner that we do not pass judgment on any corporation that we engage. We do not even ask them what their products are as long as they want to help (*http://sfldop.webs.com/onemansview.htm).*

He also said, "We believe that the work with the poor should not suffer because of our differences" *(http://www.gmanetwork.com/news/story/159950/news/nation/gawad-kalinga-to-part-ways-with-cfc-faction).*

With this shift, GK's discourse morphed to 'nation building'. Its message encouraged Filipinos to dream as dreaming generates hope and persuades overseas Filipinos and foreign benefactors to become 'saviours' as volunteers or fund raisers. The juxtaposition of the social impact that overseas contract work has on separated families with the building of clean, aesthetically appealing houses and strong communities appears to be a compelling narrative for poverty-stricken populations.

Representation

As a global organization dedicated to eradicating poverty, GK defines poverty not as a 'lack of resources, but a lack of caring and sharing'. This representation leverages on the Filipinos' religious responsibilities, culture of giving, and focus on community development. While this approach has effectively generated much needed funds and services from people overseas, it also may be seen as a manipulative effort to exploit the poor. To address this, GK's programs operate through 'caretaker teams' who are selected to live the values of faith and patriotism. These caretaker teams are responsible for organizing neighbourhood associations, delivering values formation programs, implementing community development initiatives, and mentoring the community toward self-governance.

Identity

While GK has not strayed away from its original social development cause, its autonomy has resulted in a stronger identity for the organization beyond its Philippine borders. As Curtin and Gaither (2007: 41) suggest, "the challenge for practitioners when designing a campaign is to create an identity that a product or issue and publics can share." While the faith and care discourse continues to underpin its messages, the organization has scaled up its programs to include reconstruction, peace building, 'volunteer-tourism' and social entrepreneurship. Furthermore, by offering various opportunities to become donors, volunteers, advocates, partners and researchers, GK enables its stakeholders different experiences to construct their identity within and of the organization.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates the importance of a culture-centred approach to PR and communication. It reflects how Filipino values were considered not only in program development but in its associated discourse. By constructing its vision, philosophy and messages around faith and patriotism, GK has gained multitudes of followers and seemingly very few detractors. While focused on one country, this case builds a stronger case for considering cultural approaches in public relations scholarship and practice.

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Critical Thinkers and Capable Practitioners: Preparing Public Relations Students for 21st Century

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Abstract

For university-trained PR practitioners, it is essential that the required vocational technical skills are complemented by strong critical thinking skills to enable graduates to apply strategic communication solutions at senior levels of management. By using a range of pedagogical strategies, it is possible to promote a critically-informed approach to practice. Students learn to question basic assumptions and biases and to develop strong intellectual skills. These, in turn, will provide the basis for ethical communication practices and contribute to new and creative ways of thinking about society and its communication needs.

Introduction

Training our students to be capable practitioners for the future suggests that teachers be visionaries and futurologists to identify the skills required for the communication needs of nations, corporates, public sector, not-for-profits and small-medium enterprises. This paper argues for a sustainable curriculum – one that meets the needs of the present and prepares students to meet the demands of the future. Such a curriculum identifies the importance of developing student capability in critical thinking and in research methodology. It is an approach which draws on discussion, research, peer-assessment and case studies to practise these skills and envisage future developments.

In public relations, in particular, we tend to concentrate on the practical skills for entry-level jobs to prepare the student to become a capable practitioner. Beyond these practical skills, it is also important to develop critical thinking skills, a term that is often used in descriptors of university courses but tends to be assumed rather than taught. Drawing on Moon (2008), I argue that critical thinking must be embedded at each stage of the PR curriculum, providing a strong theoretical platform for the practical skills that are learned at each level. By using direct methods of introducing, reinforcing and gaining mastery of critical thinking, PR graduates will be better equipped for the impact of changes in the profession as communication boundaries shift with changes in economic and political power.

Critical thinking and critical theory are two sides of the same coin. Critical theory focuses on issues of power and how societal change comes about. It requires us to challenge our basic assumptions, analyse and critique policy and practice, as well as blurring the boundaries between disciplines and encourages new ways of thinking about particular topics (L'Etang, 2006). Complementing this, critical thinking encourages the development of intellectual skills to assess, evaluate and take a position on ideas and arguments. It is not about what is good or bad according to opinion, but rather encourages the questioning of assumptions and biases in relation to power and to particular ideas.

Public relations practitioners operate across a wide range of environments and contexts. Consequently, practitioners are always required to research, evaluate and make judgements about the appropriate communication activities. For university-trained practitioners, it is important that graduates will not only have the technical skills but also the ability to apply strategic communication solutions at senior levels of management. In order to do this, critical thinking skills must be fostered and nurtured so that practitioners can

offer alternative ways of thinking and acting in particular environments and situations.

The aim of critical thinking from a pedagogical perspective is to shift from the purely descriptive to a deeper response to critical issues. Teachers need to challenge students at a range of different levels and to go beyond what is immediately evident. This requires as much of the teachers as it does of the students. Moving beyond the 'comfort zone' and embracing uncertainty demands competency in evaluating, arguing and judging different perspectives. By using a range of critical thinking activities as part of the curriculum, graduates will be better equipped to evaluate, adapt, respond and enact creative and imaginative communication practices in a changing world.

This paper discusses my experiences of embedding critical thinking practices at the postgraduate level of a public relations major and applying them to authentic assessment tasks. These included scenarios, literature reviews, argumentation and reflection and encouraged students to extend the boundaries and explore the edges of their current experiences.

In my experience, students do not enter postgraduate study with a well-developed critical capacity. They have completed an undergraduate curriculum which focuses on symmetry, functionalism and the benefits of building mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics (though it is the rare organization that operates within this paradigm). Undergraduate students learn the vocational skills of the PR profession to become tacticians who are able to produce messages in the interests of their organization and disseminate them through a variety of communication channels. The textbooks focus on the functions and topics that students may encounter as they begin their career journey from the entry level, as well as the particular competencies that novice practitioners are expected to achieve. A crowded curriculum leaves little space in the undergraduate degree for developing strong critical thinking skills.

Discussion-led Learning for Emancipatory Education

One of the most effective strategies of encouraging critical thinking as part of practice is by engaging in student-led discussion-based learning. Brookfield and Preskill's (1999) seminal work on discussion-led learning identifies the benefits of discussion. Using public relations concepts and topics as a means of encouraging diverse views, it is possible to receive quite unexpected opinions and perspectives. In this way, topics are explored and questioned with "an openness to rethinking cherished assumptions and to subjecting those assumptions to a continuous round of questioning, argument and counter-argument" (Brookfield & Preskill, 1999, p. 7). In this way students become conscious of ambiguity in their own understanding of literature and practice, but are also in a position to adjust their perspective through careful listening to, and consideration of, others' views. Debate can also justify and reinforce an initial position.

Intellectual discussions require a good basis for questioning assumptions and it is important that appropriate preparation is undertaken for participation in the discussion. Within the classroom context, this can be a difficult requirement because often, the opinions are solicited on the basis of "what do you think" or "what experience do you have in this area". In order to pre-empt this situation, students are required to do the preparatory reading for the session and then reflect on their own learning from the reading and the discussion.

In a reflection on her learning, one of the students* wrote:
> "Engaging in debate, discussion and conversation about not only the public relations concepts and theories, but the context surrounding the application of these theories, forced me to think about my own reasoning behind my arguments. I really enjoyed being challenged on my opinions and have to back my ideas up, it was almost representative of the quick thinking that I'll have to do when I'm actually a PR practitioner and find myself in a crisis situation."

This illustrates the benefits of critical discussion and the questioning of assumptions. In public relations, it is

essential to be sensitive to the wider society and to develop insights into the wider issues and contexts (Barnett, 1997) in which the practitioner operates.

Building Critical Questioning Through Literature Reviews and Assessment Strategies

Another pedagogical strategy for encouraging criticality is the examination and evaluation of literature on a self-selected research topic. Students identify a particular topic which interests them to develop a literature review on the topic. They then peer- review one other literature review. Through this peer consultation process, each student receives feedback from a peer, which not only allows them to improve their own submission, but also to learn from the other's draft submission. Reviewing a peer's work can often encourage rethinking and reformulating one's own work in a similar manner to peer-reviewed journal articles.

Students reported in class discussions that they found the peer-review process illuminating, in the sense that they were more aware of how they had produced their own work and were able to clarify the obstacles they had encountered themselves. Furthermore, helping another in the class appeared to focus the mind. In the revision of the literature review, in some cases, extensive changes were made, while in others, the peer-assessor was able to validate the draft submission with minimal changes. This process, too, provides a means of bringing theory into practice through collaboration with a peer about a significant piece of assessment work. It also encourages criticality of one's own work and develops the ability to provide constructive responses to the work of another. In the contemporary workplace, such skills are essential for successful and imaginative co-creation of public relations campaigns and consultative work.

A student *wrote in response to this activity:
> " Writing the peer assessment was really informative, not only did you have to look at someone else's work critically but it also forced you to go back to your own writing and rethink the way that you use phrases to demonstrate concepts. I was grateful for feedback, as it is always good to gain a fresh perspective as you often miss your own errors."

Conclusion

Practising critical thinking skills, alongside the tactical vocational skills, provide future practitioners with the ability to extend their creativity in search of practical solutions to issues faced by society and organizations in the 21st century. University-trained graduates of public relations can make a strong, ethical and creative contribution to society through constant questioning of basic assumptions and curiosity about power balances and issues. They will embrace technological innovation as another tool in the PR toolkit to engage stakeholders in creative ways. By emphasising critical thinking in a sustainable curriculum, we can be confident that our students will not only survive, but prosper, because their critical thinking, reasoning and constructive criticality of their place in the world is embedded in all that they do.

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*Quotations quoted with permission of the students and approved by the Ethics Committee, Waikato Management School, University of Waikato, Hamilton, NZ.

Public Relations Practices in Australian Local Government Authorities

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Abstract

On a typical day Local Government (LG) communicators provide communication advice to staff and senior management, monitor online and traditional media, and manage media inquiries and responses. This first national survey of 330 Australian LG communicators found patterns of communication activity were generally similar across urban and rural LG categories, but urban practitioners tend to use more social and online media, and are more proactive with traditional media, than rural practitioners. Online and social media are an important part of LG communication, but there is much more use of Twitter and Facebook and websites than blogs. The ratio of females to males was four to one. Fifty-nine percent of respondents joined local government less than five years ago, and thirty percent plan to leave in the next four years.

Keywords: Public Relations, Local Government, Urban and Regional Practice, Communication Work

Introduction

Most of the approximately 560 Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in Australia (ALGA, 2011) employ at least one person dedicated to managing communication and relationships with certain publics, although their job titles differ widely. Some have just a single public or community relations officer, some larger urban authorities employ communication teams of 10 or more specialists in media communication, social media, E-government, database management, media relations, research, and cross-cultural communications (Fitz, 2011).

Lee, Neeley and Stewart (2012) say public relations is vital to government for accountability to communities, as well as efficient dissemination of compliance, safety and other messages. But to date there has been little study or theorization of the practice of LG public relations and communication in Australia, or elsewhere (Horsley, Liu & Levenshus, 2010). This study set out to profile Australian practitioners and their practice, and provide insights that might aid development and planning for LG communicators.

Background

Definitions of public relations are debated, largely because of the diversity of things that practitioners do in their work. Sha (2011) defined 12 categories of public relations work that include: account/client management; strategic planning; public relations program planning; project management; media relations; social media relations; stakeholder relations; issues management; crisis management; internal relations and employee communications; special events, conferences and meetings; community relations. Public sector practitioners have often felt that conceptualizations of public relations better reflect practice in the private sector. This prompted Liu and Horsley (2007) to develop a model of government public relations practice which was subsequently shown to account for differences in public and private sector practice (Liu, Horsley & Levenshus, 2010).

Horsley, Liu and Levenshus (2010) compared daily activities in US government public relations at Federal, State, City and County levels. They measured the frequency of 23 activities in media relations, research, planning and tactics. They included 'blogs' and contributing to web sites among the list of tactics, but otherwise did not specify social media usage. They found that media-related activities dominated similar daily

activities across the four government levels, but found some differences between levels of government on *use of blogs*, *media inquiries*, *websites* and other activities. Their published analysis focused on the most frequent activities, with less attention on the role of infrequent, but perhaps equally important, activities such as research and planning. In the government levels that are more local (City and County) the main daily activities were media centric, including: 'responding to media inquiries', 'contribute/edit Web site', 'media release', and 'track media clips' (Horsley, Liu & Levenshus, 2010, p. 279).

This short paper reports overall patterns in communication activities among Australian local government communicators, and examines differences in online and media activities between urban and rural practitioners.

Method

Liu, Horsley and Levenshus' (2010) questionnaire was used (with permission) as the basis for this study. Ten interviews were held with communicators in LGAs, state LG coordinating bodies and professional communication associations, to discuss approaches to practice, and to refine the questionnaire for use with a nationwide sample in the Australian context.

Data were collected using a self-reported online survey between June 1 and June 26, 2012. The sample was a convenience sample of local government communicators Australia-wide. There were 408 responses, after incomplete surveys were removed the final sample was 330.

The sample were primarily female (78%) and the age range 19-34 (36%) and 34 plus (64%). Thirty-one percent perceived they were part of top management, and 69% said they were not.

Fifty-nine percent of the sample had been employed in LG for 5 years or less, with 3% having worked in the industry for 21 or more years. Thirty percent plan to leave local government in the next 4 years. In terms of qualifications, 75.2 % had a bachelors' degree or higher. Just 17 % of the sample worked in councils with 100 or fewer employees, 68 % in councils of 500 or fewer employees, and 32 % in councils with more than 500 employees.

Findings

Activities profile

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they engage in 38 different communication-related activities on a 5 point scale - "Never", "Less than monthly", "Monthly", "Weekly", "Daily". Parsimony prevents a complete review of activity patterns, the most common activities are presented here.

Most common daily activities

Work with council staff to promote positive activities (59%)
Monitor traditional media coverage on matters relevant to your organization (52%)
Advise staff on communication-related matters (51%)
Internal communication (48%)
Update website (43%)
Monitor online media (40%)
Respond to media inquiries (40%)
Liaise with stakeholders in relation to medic coverage (40%)
Write for the media (eg news releases, alerts, fact sheets) (39%)

The daily activities portray professionals who provide general internal communication advice, monitor the traditional and the online media environments, update the website, and manage media requests.

Less frequent activities

The most common weekly activities were *Local media advertising (55%)*, *Print advertising (37%), Update website* (31%), *Create printed materials* (30%), *Pitch stories to the media* (36%). The most common activity that people recorded as 'monthly' was to create newsletters (39%). Some important activities are done less than monthly, including *Develop crisis communication plans (51%), Develop strategic communication plans* (47%), *Work on larger publications such as reports and plans* (46%) and *Signage* (38%).

Influence of LG category on media and online activities

Australian Classification of Local Government categories were used to describe the respondents' local government employers (ACLG, 2008). The sample was spread as follows: Rural agricultural (16 %), Rural remote (7%), Rural significant growth (16%), Urban capital city (17%), Urban developed (19), Urban fringe (9%) and Urban regional (17%). These classifications were used as the independent variable for analysis of differences in public relations activity.

Univariate analysis of variance was used to fully analysis the data. Table 1 shows differences across LG categories in media-related activity. The ANOVA results for *Pitch stories to the media* (F= 3.403 p=0.002), *Responding to media inquiries* (F= 1.637, p=1.24) and *Write for the media* (F=2.145, p=0.039) show significant differences in frequency of *Pitching stories* and *Writing for the media*, but not in the frequency of responding to media inquiries.

Table 2 shows the online activity of the respondents across LG categories. The ANOVA results show significant differences for *Blog* (F=2.845, p=0.007), *Twitter* (F=5.412, p=0.0), *Facebook* (F= 3.903, p=0.0) and *Monitor online media* (F=3.03, p= 0.004). These results show significant differences between the council categories for many of the online activities, but not for *Update website* (F=0.721 p= 0.654) or *Online community engagement* (F=1.553, p=0.149) (no statistical difference between the groups).

The findings suggest communicators pitch stories to the media and write for the media more often in urban councils than rural. Urban communicators more frequently monitor online media and use social media tools Twitter and Facebook. Although many respondents said they never use Twitter (59%) or Facebook (45%). There are a large number who do use them daily (Twitter 19%; Facebook 23%). One respondent said his council had eight Facebook pages that are managed daily.

Conclusions

This is the first national study of Australian LG communicators, but anecdotally we know that this is a growing professional group. Fifty-nine percent of this sample have worked in LG for just 5 years or less. Along with other sectors, LG increasingly recognises that good communication helps with some their biggest challenges relating to reputation, permissions, employee support, and natural and other crises. Further analysis of data collected in this study will examine other influences on practice, perceived support from organizations, job engagement and professional development needs.

TABLE 1: MEDIA-RELATED ACTIVITY MEANS BY LG CATEGORY

Local Government Category		Pitch stories to the media	Respond to media inquiries	Write for the media
Rural agricultural	Mean	3.02	3.58	3.72
	SD	1.186	1.247	1.23
Rural remote	Mean	2.13	2.74	2.74
	SD	1.18	1.176	1.137
Rural significant growth	Mean	3.12	3.63	3.65
	SD	1.243	1.509	1.383
Urban capital city	Mean	3.23	3.75	3.8
	SD	1.335	1.405	1.341
Urban developed	Mean	3.41	3.75	3.73
	SD	1.488	1.685	1.526
Urban fringe	Mean	3.35	3.52	3.94
	SD	1.253	1.338	1.263
Urban regional	Mean	3.55	3.78	3.89
	SD	1.136	1.384	1.356
Total	**Mean**	**3.21**	**3.62**	**3.71**
	N	**330**	**330**	**330**
	SD	**1.314**	**1.444**	**1.368**

TABLE 2: ONLINE ACTIVITY MEANS BY LG CATEGORY

Local Government Category		Update website	Blogs	Online community engagement	Twitter	Facebook	Monitor online media
Rural agricultural	Mean	3.88	1.3	1.6	1.58	1.94	2.96
	SD	1.394	0.839	1.05	1.311	1.406	1.702
Rural remote	Mean	3.65	1.35	1.22	1.13	1.48	2.43
	SD	1.265	0.832	0.422	0.458	1.163	1.409
Rural significant growth	Mean	3.75	1.49	1.78	2.14	2.73	3.29
	SD	1.383	1.102	1.083	1.637	1.756	1.628
Urban capital city	Mean	3.89	2.16	1.91	2.82	2.95	3.82
	SD	1.33	1.359	1.083	1.77	1.721	1.608
Urban developed	Mean	4.13	1.75	1.71	2.78	2.98	3.71
	SD	1.211	1.164	1.069	1.727	1.69	1.453
Urban fringe	Mean	3.71	1.9	1.68	2.52	2.55	3.58
	SD	1.321	1.399	0.945	1.671	1.588	1.455
Urban regional	Mean	4.05	1.71	1.98	2.45	2.85	3.67
	SD	1.096	1.356	1.284	1.783	1.789	1.634
Total	**Mean**	**3.91**	**1.69**	**1.75**	**2.32**	**2.61**	**3.45**
	SD	**1.281**	**1.211**	**1.075**	**1.685**	**1.693**	**1.609**

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Public Relations and Social Change in Indigenous Communities

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Abstract

Public relations has the opportunity to engender social change through community relations projects with Indigenous Australians. Significant contributions at the societal level of strategy and action can support community initiatives, facilitate resolution of community issues and support community development for future sustainability. This represents an organisational position as a true 'citizen' of the community and as an agent for social change. In remote Australia, mining companies undertake community relations to deliver the social license to operate. This paper examines how Newcrest Mining uses a 'walking together' model to identify and implement projects for social change in the Western Desert of Western Australia.

Keywords: Public Relations, Social Change, Community Relations, Indigenous Communities

Introduction

The rationale for Community Relations activity for mining companies is based on four premises: that for mining companies to maintain their social license to operate, productive relationships both with communities close to mining operations and with a wider set of stakeholders are essential; that strong communities with strong economic and social capital provide a more sustainable environment within which to operate; that organisations who succeed in free markets have an obligation as citizens to give back to the community through individual and corporate philanthropy; and that communities expect companies to act sustainably, which leads companies to act in ways that meet community expectations. This in turn gives companies their 'social license to operate'. Community relations requires a commitment to effective engagement with many sectors.

The Australian context – Closing The Gap

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) identifies seven building blocks to improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: early childhood, schooling, health, economic participation, healthy homes, safe communities, and governance and leadership (Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, n.d.). All building blocks are underpinned by the importance of promoting strong indigenous cultures, heritage and language which support strong cultural identity.

The *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health 2003 – 2013* (NSFATSIH) was signed in 2003. At that time, the 17 year disparity in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was the most obvious indicator of overall Indigenous disadvantage. A priority of the NSFATSIH is to address the predeterminants of chronic disease with a particular focus on nutrition and physical activity (Department of Health & Ageing, 2010:118). The *National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in indigenous Health Outcomes* also identifies preventative health as a key priority area (COAG, 2008).

A sample of baseline health status and outcomes shows the following issues:

- Indigenous Australians suffer the worst health of any population group in Australia, with disease rates two and a half times that of the total Australian population. This is reflected in a worse life expectancy for Indigenous Australians – 12 and 10 years less for males and females respectively (Closing The Gap Clearing House, 2012:2).
- Chronic disease contributes to two-thirds of the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians (Department of Health & Ageing, 2010). In the age group 35 – 74 this contribution rises to 80% of the mortality gap between Indigenous and other Australians.
- There are complex causal relationships between cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic kidney disease. They are likely to occur together and have shared risk factors. In 2007-08, indigenous Australians were 12 times as likely as other Australians to be hospitalised with all three diseases and, over the period 2003-07, were 13 times more likely to die than non- Indigenous Australians (Closing The Gap Clearing House, 2012:2).
- Socioeconomic disadvantage with its links to poor living conditions and inequitable distribution of power, money and resources is also associated with an unhealthier lifestyle, higher chronic disease risk status and poorer health outcomes (Closing The Gap Clearing House, 2012:3).
- Issues around mental health are responsible for as high as 90% of all suicides (Department of Health & Ageing, 2010).
- Almost one in three (31%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians aged 15 years and over reported high / very high levels of psychological distress (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

There is a growing body of research on the importance of cultural continuity and connection to culture (Chandler & Lalonde, 2003) supporting the community view that positive outcomes stem from keeping culture strong (Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, n.d.). As people begin to feel more empowered and connected, this builds their self-esteem and leads them to make better choices. The indicator is increased level of social participation.

The value of lifestyle programs depends on how successfully they lead to sustained improvements in targeted behaviours, and the extent to which they positively influence longer-term chronic disease outcomes. All of the community-based projects found by Closing The Gap to be effective have been initiated and managed by the community, with technical (and sometimes financial) support being provided by external organisations. This means that the health needs and behaviours of individuals cannot be considered separately from the community contexts in which they live (Closing The Gap Clearing House, 2012:4).

Focussing the community relations effort

Clearly, the seven building blocks identified by COAG are all important, and multi-level actions are required at community level. For the community relations practitioner, a key question is where to start.

Community relations is part of the broader concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Seitel (2011:254) uses the term Community Social Responsibility to describe the responsibility organisations increasingly acknowledge to their communities: 'helping to maintain clean air and water, providing jobs for minorities, enforcing policies in the interests of all employees and, in general, enhancing everyone's quality of life'.

Peach (in Tench & Yeomans, 2009:99-100) identifies three possible levels of interaction with the community:
- Basic -- where the organisation adheres to society's rules and regulations such as paying taxes and observing the law;
- Organisational -- where the organisation takes steps to avoid or minimise negative effects on the community as a result of its operations, such as monitoring and mitigation strategies to minimise environmental impacts; and

- Societal -- where the organisation makes significant contributions towards improving the society in which it operates, such as funding community initiatives, and helping to resolve community problems.

This third level represents an organisational position as a true 'citizen' of the community and as an agent for social change (Seitel, 2011:256).

Common fundamentals in Indigenous relations comprise:
- Honouring Aboriginal cultures as the first stewards of the land;
- Adopting a partnership approach;
- Finding a way of having meaningful engagement, based on respect and trust;
- Being explicit about the intent for Indigenous people to share in the economic benefits of the development near their communities;
- Assisting Indigenous communities to manage issues, challenges and impacts that arise as a result of the company's operations;
- Actions are consistent with the organisation's Aboriginal Affairs Policy and/or with negotiated agreements, frameworks or strategy.

An Indigenous Relations Policy normally comprises statements about education, training and employment; community projects and development; business development; cultural awareness training; and protection of cultural heritage (Chamber of Minerals & Energy of Western Australia, 2007:3).

How this translates into practice

Newcrest's Telfer gold mine is in the Western Desert area in the Pilbara. There are eight remote communities in closest proximity to the mine. Largely on Martu land, these communities range in size from 550 at Jigalong to 50 at Warralong. Their isolation from each other and from larger regional centres means that issues of viability and sustainability are constant.

As the closest mining company to these communities, Newcrest is committed to helping the communities develop and build capacity so they benefit also from the company being in the region – short-term through training and employment, and long-term through improved capacity. The Martu communities are seeking economic independence and a shift from their current welfare dependency.

Three agreements were negotiated with Indigenous groups as part of the Telfer project approval process including Infrastructure and Community Benefits Agreements, and a Memorandum of Understanding. The benefits of these agreements include training programs, job opportunities, cultural heritage monitoring, cultural awareness training and financial payments and sponsorship including sports, school camps, healthy lifestyles, and emergency support for community members. More recently Newcrest has assisted with business and infrastructure development.

Like all mining companies, Newcrest is keen to attract more Indigenous employees, to meet employment commitments; ensure the economic benefits of the operation are shared; and to ensure continued access to the land for mining to secure operational stability for the company.

For employment targets to be achieved however, a number of other actions are needed first or concurrently to lay the foundations and help the people to become employable.

Over the past ten years, through its Community Relations team, Newcrest has worked with its eight communities to identify projects of relevance, and to help the communities to achieve those things that are important to the communities themselves. The key conclusion is that the approach doesn't start with jobs. The critical elements of nutrition and healthy lifestyle are basic foundations for improved outcomes in education,

levels of physical activity, management of chronic disease, cultural identity, and employment.

Further, Closing The Gap research highlights factors which reduce effectiveness of lifestyle programs (2012:2):
- A low level of community ownership and support;
- Operating in isolation from, or not addressing, broader structural issues such as poverty and lack of access to a healthy food supply.

This makes it very clear where the effort needs to go to achieve change. A "business as usual" approach, or doing it the same in the bush as in regional or metropolitan centres, won't work in these communities.

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The impact of divergent historical and cultural factors on convergence in global communication practice

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Abstract

Communication practice is increasingly converging around globally consistent approaches and techniques shaped by both globalisation and globalising communications technologies. However, this paper argues, national and regional practice histories and cultural characteristics have shaped, and continue to shape, practice in individual markets. The paper analyses the extent of that these divergent histories and cultures have shaped the structure and practices of the public relations industry in Australia and other countries. The paper challenges the common assumptions about public relations development and industry practice having developed from a predominantly US-based model progressively disseminated globally. It traces the history of public relations in Australia, counter-pointing its distinctive origins, to the US-origin thesis. It also examines the impact of demography and diverse national culture on industry shape and practice, comparing the Australian industry to that of other industries around the world. It uses mini-case studies of campaigns in specific countries to assess the extent to which they are culturally-bound by historical and cultural differences and the extent to which they are capable of being transferred or adapted to individual markets. For instance, assumptions about globally-consistent brand identities are contradicted by McDonalds' branding practices in markets such as Canada and Japan. The paper also discusses how emerging market PR industries are being shaped by distinctive and divergent cultures and development paths and may create new structural and practice models as the emerging economies becoming dominant internationally. The authors suggest that history and cultural diversity continue, and will continue to, shape national and regional practices.

Introduction

For the last half of the 20th century the dominant paradigm regarding public relations history and practice was US-centric (L'Etang, 2001). Public relations history was assumed to have started in the late 19th century in the US and was developed through the activities of early practitioners such as Lee and Bernays.

In the early 21st century the historical paradigm has increasingly been replaced within public relations academic circles by scholarship exploring the history of public relations in many countries ranging from India to European nations and Australia. Yet so far the implications for public relations practice of differing national and regional histories, cultures and societies has been less studied.

Discussion of public relations history have generally been largely from the perspective of the PR industry (Olasky, 1987, Hill and Knowlton 1967 etc). They have sometimes, while mentioning historical figures who practised image management, failed to explore relevant developments in mainstream historical studies which have systematically researched the representation and image of rulers and institutions , and the use of persuasive techniques to shape those images and representation and maintain consensus among the ruled.

Trends in public relations history

Within this context it is possible to identify four broad trends in the development of this history of PR represented by: first, the US-centric periodization of public relations history as exemplified by Bernays,

(1952); second, the US-centric event and fact-based narrative public relations history such as Cutlip, (1994,1995); third, the emerging histories of public relations globally and in individual companies (L'Etang, 2008, 2001, 1999; L'Etang and Pieczka, 2006; Watson 2008; Croft et al 2008; in Spain (Salcedo, 2008; Miller 1999) and, fourth, the mainstream historical research on communication, representation and image undertaken by Eisenstein (1979), Sharpe (2009), Burke (1992) and Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983).

Raaz and Wehmeier (2010) remark that most of these public relations academic trends have lacked theoretical underpinnings beyond a periodization model in which 'linear maturation' is the major feature. This perspective is also reflected in L'Etang (2008) who argues that the US bias in public relations history writing "may have limited theoretical developments" and has 'profoundly shaped the discipline". The situation is further complicated by confusion about the nature of the word propaganda, a word freighted with negative connotations from the 20th century, but which had previously had a more straightforward meaning closer to that of other persuasive techniques. A further complication arose as a result of an anachronistic imposition of concepts of symmetric and unidirectional communication and asymmetric communications on previous public relations history aiding the development of the Whiggish (Butterfield, 1965) historical periodization model in which public relations inexorably progresses from asymmetry and press agentry to symmetric communications and social media while ignoring the fact that not all modern public relations practice necessarily follows a symmetric model. Equally anachronistic is the tendency in some histories of public relations to use the search for the first appearance of the words 'public relations' as the beginning of public relations history. This is lexicography rather than history. Moreover, in the past few decades there has been a proliferation of terms used to describe public relations function ranging across corporate relations, corporate affairs, corporate communications and so on. If there is not common agreement on what terms describe the function today it is unproductive to ignore the possibility of different terms describing the function or activities in the past. Indeed, in historiographical terms this entire approach is antiquarian (Woolf, 2011) rather than historical.

An Australian history

A narrative, event and fact-based view of Australian public relations history illustrates why the US-centric model is not valid. For instance the Tasmanian Government had undertaken public relations activities as part of tourist and immigration promotions from the 1820s when the artist Joseph Lycett (who never visited Tasmania) produced lithographs to encourage immigration and investment in the colony (McPhee, 2006) and official photographers were appointed from 1895 (Reynolds, 2012) to promote tourism. Lithography played a part in 18th century British promotion as well as illustrated by William Hogarth's role in developing strategies for, and depicting the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens in London (Coke and Borg, 2011). In the early 20th century Australian trade and tourism promotion by the Australian Government and the Australian Dried Fruits Board (Turnbull, 2010) mirrored similar UK efforts under the leadership of Sir Stephen Tallents (Huxley, 1970) as part of the Imperial Trade Preference and Imperial Trade Promotion campaigns throughout the British Empire.

 Most nations can now begin to point to similar events and facts which push the public relations historical development further back and situate it within national contexts. Yet, while this corrects the US-centric view of public relations history, it does not provide a strong theoretical base or framework for understanding how and why persuasive techniques around representation and image have evolved. For this we need to turn to mainstream histories of human and national development. Within this context two hypotheses can be suggested. First, that the drive to communicate is inherent in the development of human consciousness since our earliest days as illustrated by rock art (Lewis-Williams, 2002) and other pre-historic developments (Renfrew, 2007). Second, that is how this drive to communicate developed and was used is rooted in the different historical, religious, cultural and economic developments within different countries and regions at different times.

Why it might be so?

The problem is to relate this to modern public relations practice and to interrogate its implications for global public relations practice. To address the problem it is useful to look at the very persuasive reasons for adopting a US-centric view of public relations history and practice as this. In Australia such reasons include: the impact of US text-books on the body of knowledge explored by undergraduates studying public relations; the lack of knowledge of history and earlier forms of public relations; and, the impact of globalisation and the power of US culture.

Balanced against these issues are the way language, cultural sensitivities, demography, religion, culture and social practices impact on public relations practice. For the purposes of this paper we illustrate through case studies how these influences impact public relations practice nationally and regionally rather than converging globally.

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Public Relations and Social Responsibility: PR student perceptions of their role in public discourse on complex social issues such as mental illness and suicide

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Abstract

*This paper will report on the findings of a research project that aims to explore the "mental health literacy" of first year public relations (PR) students at the University of Canberra. This research is being conducted to assist University of Canberra (UC) Public Relations (PR) educators in the development of appropriate materials on social responsibility in the curricula and to assist partner organisation the Hunter Institute of Mental Health (which manages the Response Ability project www.**responseability**.org/) in the development of curriculum materials for use by PR educators and students around Australia.*

Keywords: mental health, public relations students, media, perceptions

The qualitative research will explore the students' understanding of mental health/illness and their awareness of their role in the public discourse around these issues, including the formation and representation of images and information about mental health and illness and their promulgation in the public sphere. This research is set within the context of exploring the students' understanding of the broader social implications of public relations - ie how they might see their role in the responsible representation of diversity, facilitation of diverse voices, and community education around complex social and cultural issues. It will involve six focus groups of first year PR students at the University of Canberra in August 2012, the outcomes of which will be presented at the Research Colloquium.

This project builds on significant research produced as a partnership between health and journalism researchers over the past ten to fifteen years in Australia. The work by Pirkis, Blood and colleagues has highlighted the important role that media play in influencing community attitudes towards and perceptions of both mental illness and suicide. This research was also influential in guiding the content and approach of *Response Ability*, a project funded by the Australian Government as part of the *Mindframe* National Media Initiative. The *Mindframe* Initiative is designed to encourage responsible and accurate media portrayal of suicide and mental illness, by increasing the knowledge and skills of media professionals and those that work with the media in Australia.

International research indicates that many forms of media play an important role in influencing community attitudes towards and perceptions of both mental illness and suicide. The link was first made over 235 years ago when Goethe published the *Sorrows of Young Werther,* where the eponymous hero took his own life. An increase in suicides in a number of European countries led to the assertion that the book influenced some of its readers to also take their own lives (Thorson & Oberg, 2003, in Pirkis & Blood, 2010). Up to the 1960s the debate was largely based on anecdotal evidence, but since that time there have been extensive studies examining the links between media portrayals of suicide and subsequent suicidal behaviours (Pirkis & Blood 2010). The Critical Review undertaken by Pirkis and Blood in 2001, and updated in 2010, demonstrated that

in certain circumstances the non-fictional presentations of suicide in newspapers, television, books, the internet and mixed media can influence actual suicidal behaviour.

The media is also a very important source of information for the public regarding mental illness and is influential in shaping people's attitudes and behaviours. Community understanding of mental illness is "less than optimal" (Pirkis & Francis 2012) and stigma, stereotyping and discrimination are not uncommon. A review of the research into this issue has found that there is a tendency for various forms of news and information media to present mental illness in a way that promotes stigma and/or perpetuates myths about mental illness (Pirkis & Francis 2012). The Review concludes that news and information media can have a negative effect on the way people think about mental illness by encouraging them to think that those with mental illness are violent and dangerous, thereby fostering fear and social avoidance. It also found that there is potential for news and information media to have a positive impact on knowledge, attitudes and behaviours about mental illness through means such as mass media stigma reduction campaigns, web-based literacy programs and documentary films (Pirkis & Francis 2012).

The research into the effects of media representation, therefore, is solid. However unlike the extensive research that has been undertaken in the media and journalism fields around the portrayal of mental illness and suicide, research into the formative and intermediary role of public relations in the promulgation of public and media messages around mental illness and suicide is minimal.

While many may argue that the potential for public relations practitioners to influence media content is limited, studies on the effect of public relations on the media have found that almost half of the articles published in major metropolitan media are the result of public relations activity (Zawawi 2001). Public relations plays an intrinsic role in the production of media stories. Research has shown that public relations practitioners are an intrinsic part of the news process and can make the work of journalists much easier (Cameron, Sallot & Curtin 1997). In particular, research also suggests that health journalists may have favourable attitudes towards writing about certain health topics promoted by practitioners (Len-Rios et al, 2009).

Public relations is not just involved in media, however. It also plays an essential role in public discourse through developing and framing messages and information through a range of channels including speeches and media comment by senior managers; publications and creation of images and text through a range of media and events; advocacy and management of issues; activism across the sectors; community relations and corporate social responsibility, among a plethora of other responsibilities. It can contribute to a clear and considered portrayal of complex issues, or it can unwittingly or otherwise contribute to stereotyping and one-dimensional discussion.

Its practitioners, therefore, need to understand the nuances in this discourse and the importance of their role in it. What better place to start than the institution where it all begins – the university.

The Hunter Institute of Mental Health works with PR educators around Australia to develop and disseminate resources to engage students in responsible communication about suicide and mental illness in their professional practice. These resources are parallel to those produced for journalism educators and students regarding responsible portrayals of these issues. Little is known, however, of the mindset and perceptions of students about their social responsibility once they become professional practitioners, and their understanding of their broader social responsibility. We know little about their understanding of mental illness and suicide, and therefore what kinds of resources and curricula will resonate with them. Through research such as Bowen's (2003) we know that students do not understand the level of strategic decision-making and ethical counsel required of practitioners. Bowen's later research of PR majors at a leading university in the US revealed student's perceptions of PR as primarily promotion or image enhancement and "manipulative or deceptive by nature" (Bowen 2006 p407), leading to the argument that these misconceptions were hampering PR's ability to attract students with "aptitudes for analysis, honesty and strategic management" (Bowen p409).

This research, therefore, aims to influence the mental health literacy of the next generation of PR practitioners by developing resources not only for UC PR curricula, but also national and international curricula. This will contribute to work done by organisations such as the Hunter Institute of Mental Health to promote mental health and wellbeing in Australia by increasing community understanding and support of these issues. On a broader level, it will also contribute to the academic discussion around, and practice of, the role of public relations as the ethical voice and strategic leader in organisational social responsibility.

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"Public Relations Research is Not as New as Some Think": An Historical Perspective on the Evolution of Public Relations Measurement and Evaluation Practice

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Introduction

The measurement and evaluation of public relations activity has long been an important practice discussion and debate. Following on from J. Grunig's initiatives with AT&T in the late 1970s, a continuing series of studies has identified it as a centrally important issue for research and practice implementation (McElreath, 1980, 1989; Synnott and McKie, 1997, Watson and Noble 2007; Watson 2008, Watson 2012). The evolution of public relations measurement, however, starts much earlier, with some suggesting that media monitoring practices can be identified from the late 18th century onwards, even involving staff of the first US president, George Washington (Lamme and Miller, 2010).

From the beginning of the 20th century, when 'public relations' began to be widely used as the description for a set of communication activities, measurement practices can be identified. Some of those methods used in the first decade of the 20th century would be familiar to practitioners over a century later. One of these, 'The Barometer', was used by the first known publicity agency in the US, The Publicity Bureau of Boston (Cutlip (1994). It a card index of the attitudes of editors, gained from visits, and media usage of publicity material. This allowed the agency to judge "whether a paper is "Good" or "Bad" from the standpoint (of its clients)" (ibid, p. 21). Cutlip commented on The Barometer, with considerable irony, that "public relations research is not as new as some think" (1994, p .21).

This paper traces that development of measurement and evaluation methods and practices which parallel public relations' holistic beginnings through to its transformation into a communication practice, with strong publicity influences. Along the way, there has been the worldwide expansion of public relations practices, services and education; the growth of measurement and evaluation services; and the influence of academic thinking.

A timeline narrative is applied in order to describe and discuss the evolution of public relations measurement and evaluation over more than a century. In many ways this evolution has similarities to the development of public relations as an emerging and then extensive communications practice. Like public relations, it starts with elements of both social science research, especially opinion polling, and of a practice emphasis on publicity through media channels. By the mid-20th century, this moves much more towards a publicity-led practice with the use of media analytics becoming far more important than social science methods. However, but the beginning of the 21st century, the balance was moving back towards more sophistication in measurement and the wider alignment of public relations communication objectives with organisational objectives, especially in corporate public relations where new techniques such as scorecards (Zerfass, 2005) are being used.

Early influences

Although Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays are often cited as influential fathers of public relations practice, it was Arthur Page who introduced systematic opinion research into corporate public relations and organisational communication at AT&T. He championed the use of surveys which were to be an important factor in

developing a customer-facing culture at the telecommunications giant. "He deserves credit for recognizing the need for feedback and encouraging development of systems to gauge the moods of AT&T's publics. Integration of formal feedback systems into the public relations function is one of his contributions to public relations practise" (Griese 2001, p. 122).

By the late 1930s and early 1940s in North America, two methods of measurement were being established that are still widely used. Batchelor (1938) provided two examples of the monitoring and interpretation of media coverage. The first was that the Roosevelt Administration gave close attention to both publicity dissemination and its reception. "In other words, it watches carefully all changes in the political attitudes of a community" (p. 212). Batchelor also referred to the extensive media monitoring operation of the city of Toledo, Ohio in the Great Depression. It measured some 72,000 media clippings from newspapers and found ninety-one per cent favourable to the city's interests (p. 214). So it can be seen that at high levels of national and city government, measurement and evaluation were taking place using methods that are still in place today. At the same time, Tedlow (1979) identified the nexus between advertising and editorial space which was gained by press agents and publicists. This was later exemplified by Plackard & Blackmon (1947) who offered a fully worked example of Advertising Value Equivalence, many decades before it became a common (if dubious) practice.

1950s and 1960s

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was a world-wide growth in public relations activity. In the UK, whose Institute of Public Relations was founded in 1948, there was evidence of discussion of evaluation in its *Journal* mainly proposing analysis of clippings and documents. But the increasing number of "how to" books on public relations produced in the UK and North America barely touched the topic. Analysis of the 'program research and evaluation' sub-section of Cutlip's bibliography of public relations research (Cutlip, 1965) finds that there was little discussion of the methodology of measuring public relations activity or programmes, with the main emphasis on objective setting based on opinion research.

Evaluation remained an elusive topic. IPR President Alan Eden-Green, writing the foreword in Ellis and Bowman's Handbook of Public Relations (1963), posits PR as being "primarily concerned with communication" (Ellis & Bowman, 1963, foreword). Other texts at the time also focused on processes, but not planning, measurement or outcomes. In Germany, Albert Oeckl (1964) proposed three methods of research – publics and how they use media, content analysis and research on media effects. He was much more linked to the Bernaysian social science of PR than were UK practitioners.

Increasing discussion

The 1970s was a decade when books and articles addressing public relations evaluation started to appear. *Measuring and Evaluating Public Relations Activities* was published by the American Management Association in 1968 with seven articles on methods of measuring public relations results. Soon after, Robinson's *Public Relations and Survey Research* (1969) was published. Pavlik says that "(Robinson) predicted that PR evaluation would move away from seat-of-the-pants approaches and toward "scientific derived knowledge" (1987, p. 66). Academics then began taking the lead. A conference in 1977 at the University of Maryland chaired by James E. Grunig, partnering with AT&T, was followed by the first scholarly special issue, 'Measuring the Effectiveness of Public Relations,' in P*ublic Relations Review's* Winter 1977 edition, which featured papers from the conference.

1980s and 1990s – Debate widens

Following on from the initial conference and academic journal discussion late in the previous decade, US journals came alive in the 1980s with papers from leading academics such as Glenn Broom, David Dozier, James Grunig, Douglass Newsom and Donald Wright. From the consultancy side, Lloyd Kirban of Burson

Marsteller and Walter Lindenmann of Ketchum were prolific and drove the subject higher on the practitioner agenda. In 1990 *Public Relations Review* had a seminal special edition on evaluation, 'Using Research to Plan and Evaluate Public Relations' (Summer 1990). Widely cited, it showed that measurement and evaluation were consistently part of academic and professional discourse.

By the early 1990s, public relations measurement and evaluation was a leading research and professional practice topic (McElreath, 1989; White & Blamphin, 1994; Synnott & McKie, 1997). There were major practitioner education initiatives in several developed countries, many linked closely to the Excellence Theory expression of public relations as communication management. In the US, the Institute for Public Relations Research and Education (now the Institute for Public Relations, IPR), harnessing Walter Lindenmann's enthusiasm, published research and commentaries on establishing objectives and assessing results. The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) published its Gold Paper No.11: Public Relations Evaluation: Professional Accountability. In 1996, the Swedish PR body, Svenska Informationsförening, moved ahead of the debate at the time to report on Return on Communication, a form of Return on Investment that considered the creation of non-financial value through communications.

New century

In the first decade of the 21st century, other influences came upon PR planning, research and evaluation. Approaches based on scorecards (Zerfass, 2005) have moved the emphasis of evaluation of corporate communication away from the effects of media towards the development of communication strategies more closely related to organisational objectives where KPIs are measured, rather than outputs from communication activity. The decade ended with the adoption of The Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles at the European Measurement Summit in June 2010 (AMEC, 2010). This statement of seven principles of measurement of public relations activity favours measurement of outcomes, rather than media results, and the measurement of business results and of social media, but rejects AVEs as failing to indicate the value of public relations activity. It was a benchmark of basic measurement and evaluation practices and an attempt by the measurement service industry to define tenets of media analysis before addressing the challenges of both social media with its emphasis on 'conversation'. The Barcelona Declaration demonstrates that PR measurement and evaluation is a major service business and greatly developed from the cuttings agencies of 50 to 100 years ago.

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Sustainability Communication – PR's Chance to Engender Social Change

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Abstract

The need for corporate sustainable activity has increasingly become an integral element of community acceptance, both locally and globally. With public relations functioning as a buffer between organisations and their publics, it appears logical that the PR discipline would be the one that is centrally engaged in sustainability communication. This paper argues that true sustainability communication ought to embrace systems thinking, partner-learning models, and servant-leader approaches, that in turn provide an opportunity for public relations to not only move toward a "knowledge manager" function in an organization but also achieve the momentum that is necessary to effect sustained change.

Keywords: Sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility, Partner Learning, Community Orientation, Systems Thinking

Introduction

The concept of sustainable development has been a subject of debate ever since it became a public issue. Often solely connected to environmental challenges (e.g., climate change, waste, air pollution), it also encompasses social (poverty, public health, marginalization) and economic (unfair competition, labour conditions, responsible production) challenges. The high value sustainability places on learning and innovation as a response to problems, rather than critique and complaint required that communication had to move from a vehicle of information to an active intervention tool to trigger changes aimed at encouraging people's participation. As Kilbourne (2004) put it, "sustainable communication is characterized as (…) working towards a world where humankind can preserve rather than dominate nature." In turn, the need for corporate sustainable activity has increasingly become an integral element of community acceptance, both locally and globally. For instance, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has moved toward "sustainable agriculture" and the World Bank supports the idea of "sustainable development" (Gilman, 1990).

With public relations functioning as a buffer between organisations and their publics, and organisations eager to not only participate in responsible behaviour but also communicate that they are actively involved in community initiatives and development, it appears logical that the PR discipline would be the one that is centrally engaged in sustainability communication. Grunig, for instance, argued in a recent interview (Oancea, 2011) that public relations should embrace the sustainability movement, "because the ultimate objective of public relations is to make organizations more sustainable." The two key challenges for PR are how to clarify the relationship between sustainability and corporate social responsibility and figure out how to create effective and 'sustainable' communication.

Therefore, a discussion of sustainability communication has to be different from corporate social responsibility or social marketing strategies, which are typically manifested through unidirectional tactics aimed to influence positions of target stakeholder audiences. Sustainability communication has to be about shared global visions, a new kind of cooperation between organisations and their stakeholders as well as the various communication functions, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of capacity building and change. This paper proposes integrated sustainability communication as a holistic and collaborative approach between CSR strategies and that derived from participatory pedagogy, and ultimately prescribes an expanded role for public relations in society.

Expanding the paradigm of corporate social responsibility

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defined corporate social responsibility as "(…) the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large" (Holme & Watts, 2000). While there have been different interpretations of CSR (in the United States it is typically defined in terms of a philanthropic model, in Europe as conducting one's core business in a socially responsible way), it remains nonetheless connected to the wealth creation process.

Consequently, current strategic communication practices indicative of this approach, such as social accounting, green marketing, environmental scanning and early warning risk planning, by and large, do not challenge classical economic principles (such as Smith's "invisible hand of the market" theory or capitalist ideologies). Unlike them, sustainability communication requires radical changes from those dominant social paradigms, as corporations can no longer be content to pursue their own interests but are expected to seek out and contribute actively to the collective interest (Gendron et al., 2004). However, radical change is usually anathema to the dominant groups in whose interest the paradigm is maintained (Kilbourne, 2004).

While one can appreciate the focus PR puts on communication research, this narrow orientation leaves any model (such as the overall well-respected two-way symmetric model by Grunig) open to the critique that in reality a truly balanced communications process is rarely encouraged, impeded by vested interests, which dictate the nature of PR practice. What is needed then is a blurring of the boundaries between communication tasks and other organizational processes and decision-making, integrating the following perspectives.

Systems thinking

A whole-systems perspective as applied to public relations practice would increase research on how organisations interact with the external and internal environment and how those interactions are managed by an enhanced awareness of interconnections, relationships, consequences, and feedback loops. PR already serves a feedback function that helps organisations interpret their environments in order to achieve homeostasis (Botan & Hazleton, 2006). What distinguishes the new thinking is a willingness to consider all significant aspects of an issue, and not to jump to appealing (and often self-serving) simplifications.

Whereas most organisations today practice a two-way asymmetric approach by using information that is beyond reproach to retain reputation and credibility whilst persuading their audiences (Tench & Yeomans, 2006), a skilful use of the changed media and communication landscape would enable PR practitioners to leverage their boundary spanning function to create a truly two-way adaptive open system. Digital media, for instance, have opened a gateway enabling publics to commence dialogue and interact through channels such as tweets, blogs and forums. The relevance of a systems perspective to public relations in practice lies in managing these interactions with the external environment in a way that not only ensures positive feedback but also creates participatory or collaborative pursuits for solutions to social challenges.

Servant leadership

Robert Greenleaf first coined the term servant-leadership in a 1970 essay. It emphasizes increased service to others, a holistic approach to work, promoting a sense of community, and the sharing of power in decision-making. Servant-leadership is not a temporary fix but a long-term, transformational approach to life and work that has the potential for creating positive change throughout society (Spears, 2005). True excellence in management (communication) and leadership, then, cannot only be a willingness to engage in fair and balanced communication but needs to originate from an organizational culture of civility that routinely utilises the mode of community. Given that this approach touches upon both image/position and outreach/communication, it falls well within the description of PR. Servant-leadership has actually very old

roots in many indigenous cultures, who were holistic, cooperative, communal, intuitive and spiritual, and hence centered on both being guardians of the future and respecting the ancestors who walked before (J. Bordas in Greenleaf, 2003). Some businesses (e.g., Southwest Airlines, Starbucks) have recently begun to employ servant-leadership as an important framework that ensures the long-term effects of related management and leadership approaches such as systems thinking.

The Role for PR

In today's communication environment, the new and social media have already placed an enormous control of communication into the hands of publics and have made communication inherently interactive and symmetrical. As a result, public relations practitioners have to communicate more symmetrically with their publics, even if only to stay "in the loop" or be heard. But this scenario has also provided PR with huge opportunities. As much as one may want to decry them, the digital media provide public relations people with a superb tool for listening to publics, for gathering information relevant to management decision-making, and generally for providing publics a forum or voice in management of important issues (Oancea, 2011).

Being in charge of media and communication, PR practitioners can be the ones, who work to break down artificial barriers and create partnerships. They can also function as catalysts to seek leverage points or bottlenecks where a little effort can set processes in motion that have beneficial, system-wide effects. It integrates the organisation's total communication in a way that balances managerial (internal) and leadership (external) efforts and distils it into a framework, which can guide the organization into the future (Varey, 1998), which puts PR in a vital position to lead an orientation toward sustainability and social change.

Usually acting in the background, doing what needs doing, not directly calling attention to itself, PR shares the characteristics of "servant leadership" with the sustainability movement. Drawing together scholarship on communication, new media and society, PR has placed a high value on learning and innovation as a response to problems (e.g., dealing with an active audience in a mobile media world), rather than critique and complaint. As a gateway function toward outside stakeholders, it is continually managing diverse opinions in an integrative and participatory manner. Lastly, while – as Grunig has put it (Oancea, 2011) – convincing management that sustainability should be the purpose of public relations will be a huge challenge, like no other function, PR's location near the centres of decision-making provides the opportunity to achieve exactly that.

Success Stories

There are a growing number of companies that follow the ideas promoted by sustainability communication. Those organisations not only use their public relations in a fashion that successfully communicates sustainability ideas but they employ those strategies as a result of a cultural commitment to those principles.

Aveda Cosmetics focuses on practical messages of what the company does but also what consumers can do to protect the environment. Its communication is integral to its founding mission of " (…) caring for the world in which we live, from the products we make to the ways in which we give back to society". Not only has the company's entire product line been developed from plant-based sources, but by encouraging consumers to use renewable energy sources themselves, *Aveda* helps them to feel and become part of the solution. This participatory use of PR creates a bond between the company and its stakeholders and engages the latter to partake in *Aveda's* mission (Stratos, 2009).

Leading UK retailer *Marks & Spencer* lives by its Plan A, a sustainability strategy whose plan it is to achieve carbon neutrality and zero waste to landfill. In achieving this, it employs external auditing of its sustainability data and internal audit of its Plan A governance and managements systems. It supplements this with corporate communication on areas, where consumers can take action to improve their environmental and social

footprint. For example, it initiated product lifecycle campaigns and partnerships with NGOs (e.g., encouraging clothing recycling through OXFAM). Similar to *Aveda*, *M&S* has not only built a positive relationship with its stakeholders but the retailer manages to engage people in a way that they can take meaningful actions themselves (Stratos, 2009).

Conclusion

What we hoped to have demonstrated is that the "techniques" of strategic communication do not need to change. What need to change profoundly though are the ideologies and philosophies behind the practice of the techniques. There will be an increased attention to redesigning human institutions that sustainability ultimately requires, especially in economics and governance. This blurring of boundaries between communication tasks and other organizational and environmental processes (both ecological and social) provides an opportunity for public relations to not only move into the central function of "knowledge manager" (Jensen, 1994) in an organization but also achieve the momentum that is necessary to effect sustained change, arguably contributing a novel approach to message dissemination and community-oriented communication.

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Bridging the divided discipline: Complexity theory, action research and public relations leadership

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Abstract

This paper argues that many of the contemporary challenges facing PR practice can be better understood through the application of complexity theory. These include globalisation, the changing media environment and shifting disciplinary interactions. It also suggests that action research provides a useful and compatible process through which these issues can be studied. An action research approach is also positioned as helpful because it stimulates dialogue, deliberation and joint problem solving between practice and academia. The paper ends with a case study that explores the application of these ideas in practice.

Key words: complexity theory, action research, practice, public relations.

Introduction

This paper is sympathetic to the idea that Public Relations academics and practitioners can appear to inhabit different worlds. As van Ruler (2005) poetically put it in the title of her *Public Relations Review* commentary, "professionals are from Venus and scholars are from Mars". The paper highlights through theory and a practical case study how action research can encourage greater dialogue, deliberation and joint problem solving between practice and academia. This perspective is further enhanced with progressive insights from knowledge and project management.

Effective collaboration between practitioners and researchers is seen as vital given the nature of the challenges confronting modern PR practice. These are framed using insights from complexity theory that have shaped thinking in the PR academy. It is suggested that action research provides a vehicle to engage practitioners with these ideas through partnership working and the application of theory within a vocational context. The usefulness of this approach is also underlined given the compatible ontology shared by complexity theory and action research. This alignment provides a timely opportunity to bring both sides of a divided discipline together to address a series of pressing, contemporary issues.

A leading light in stormy seas?

The paper begins by noting that complexity theory provides a useful lens through which to scrutinize important contemporary themes in Public Relations, such as those under discussion at this year's World Public Relations Forum. These include globalisation, the changing media environment and shifting disciplinary interactions. Such developments are shaping PR practice and can be identified by a set of common conditions and ailments such as instability, uncertainty, and turmoil. This situation creates a climate in which PR practitioners occupy vulnerable, "not knowing" or "not knowing with much confidence" spaces.

Complexity perspectives are particularly useful in this context as they address uncertainty and the limits of knowledge. It is for this reason the PR academy has engaged in a meaningful and sustained discussion of complexity-inspired responses. Before the era-defining events of 2008 that resulted in a global economic crisis and widespread political and social dislocation, PR theorists (for example, Murphy, 1996; 2007 and McKie, 2001) demonstrated that the world is self-evidently more dynamic and fast moving than it ever used to be and argued that the uncertain environment challenged practice to better understand, adapt, and create new strategies for dealing with this volatility. Management scholars similarly suggested how insights from complexity theorists (Stacey, Griffin, & Shaw, 2000; Mitleton-Kelly, 2003; Allen, Maguire, & McKelvey, 2011) enable organisations to better respond to challenges that emerge from this situation. Complexity thinkers consistently emphasize the limitations on an organization's ability to predict, plan, and control behaviour in the external environment (Sanderson, 2006). As a result, turbulence has the effect of moving the key to organisational success away from the creation of an optimal strategy and onto a more skilful strategy process (van Der Heijden, 2005).

Because of this uncertainty and unpredictability, as well as the central role that they afford relationships and the communicative process, complexity-based perspectives offer distinct advantages to public relations. Allen, Maguire, and McKelvey's (2011) *Sage Handbook of Complexity and Management* gathered together leading scholars in the area to benchmark progress. They note that Complexity is "one of the fastest growing topics of research in the natural and social sciences" . . . . [that] is increasingly being taken up by practitioners in business, government and non-government organizations" (Maguire, Allen, & McKelvey, 2011, p. 1).

In contrast to this bold and optimistic endorsement from scholars in other disciplines, evidence does not yet exist to make the same claims for PR. Indeed, one study from our own field that sought to explore this issue in the UK found that a group of senior PR practitioners from a range of public and private sector organisations were not actively engaging with complexity thinking or influenced by its ideas (Willis, 2011). The absence of PR practitioners from these debates inhibits theoretical development and casts a cloud over the hope that complexity inspired approaches can help PR practitioners seeking to respond to the challenges of turbulent times. This situation therefore suggests the need and opportunity for dialogue and bridge building between academia and practice on these issues.

Complexity and Action Research intersect

A key research issue that lies at the heart of the previous discussion is the need to better understand how PR practitioners might learn, change and adapt in the face of uncertain, random and unknowable outcomes. It is proposed that an action research approach, guided by a theoretical framework shaped by complexity theory, is well suited to an investigation of this phenomenon, as well as having the capacity to productively gather together practitioners and academics in a robust and systematic research process.

Reason and Bradbury (2008) note that action research is a family of practices of living inquiry and is "not so much a methodology as an orientation to enquiry that seeks to create positive participative communities of enquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues" (p. 1). With an action research project, communities of enquiry and action evolve and address questions and issues that are significant for those who participate as co-researchers. Typically, such communities engage in systematic cycles of action and reflection and these characteristics mean that action research is based on a different paradigm to conventional academic research. It has different purposes, is based in different relationships, has different ways of conceiving knowledge and relates to practice differently (Reason and Bradbury, 2008). These attributes help to generate practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their working lives.

Action research also has an affinity with complexity approaches. Many of the researchers considering complexity in a management context promote the benefits of an action research perspective. For example, Allen and Boulton's (2011) concern with uncertainty in a complex environment intersects with an action research orientation: "emphasis is placed on staying with the actual experience of what is, in focusing on the particularity of an actual, living situation and working with all the variation and all the uncertainty that is present" (p. 169). As a living, emergent process action research is well suited to an investigation of complexity.

From practitioner disengagement to intelligent participation

In contrast to the knowledge transfer that constitutes much academic practice, an action research approach creates space for the greater acknowledgement of the knowledge PR practitioners can bring and the productive role this can play. The author believes more can be done to create effective and dynamic research by involving practitioners in expanded interactions and explicitly co-created learning processes. As in knowledge and project management, this kind of reconfiguration both encourages an associated shift "toward continuously improving knowledge and skills (in order to be flexible enough to meet the needs of an ever-changing environment) . . . . [and] a more creative management approach concerned with developing context and processes for innovation" (Jones and McKie, 2009, p. 190).

Jones and McKie (2009) develop this reconfiguration as a guiding framework for what they call "intelligent participation" (p. 180). Indeed, the author would go so far as to suggest that much practice based public relations research might be better considered as intelligent participation in stakeholder dialogue. Such personal reflections are also sympathetic to the view that action research can expand the hold over knowledge held traditionally by universities and other institutions of higher learning (Reason and Bradbury, 2008).

Coping with uncertainty: Developing a leadership model with practice

In its final section the paper moves from the conceptual to the practical. A discussion highlights how a PR complexity leadership model is being developed by the author as part of an action research project with one of the world's largest employers. The model focuses on a set of adaptive, creative and flexible behaviours. At its heart is a leadership mindset that embraces uncertainty and promotes individual as well as collective learning.

The model is used as a theoretical base to help PR practitioners make sense of their own experience when confronting challenges linked to uncertainty, instability and turmoil. This is especially pertinent for the organisation involved as it is experiencing a period of unprecedented change and turbulence. The insight generated by the interactions inherent in the action research process is then recycled and applied to further develop and refine the model for practical use.

Summary

Some of the major contemporary challenges facing PR practice can be characterised by uncertainty, instability and turmoil. It is proposed that complexity theory generates useful coping strategies for practitioners seeking to navigate these issues. Although some in the academy have engaged with these ideas, complexity inspired responses are not yet prevalent in PR practice. An opportunity therefore emerges in which this thinking can be used to construct a bridge between the academy and practice. It is suggested that the participative orientation of action research can create deliberative spaces where necessary collaboration and innovative problem solving can take place.

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Business and Society: An Integrated Study of Corporate Philanthropy and Organization–Public Relationships in China

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Abstract

This paper investigates the organization–public relationships of companies (state-owned, private, and multinational) operating in China with their publics during corporate philanthropic process. Nineteen participants from the companies and NGOs were interviewed. The results of this study offer public relations practitioners and educators a picture of the forms, motivations, characteristics, and environment of corporate philanthropy in China, and the relationship types, cultivation strategies, and outcomes that companies built with their publics after undertaking philanthropic activities.

Introduction

This paper investigates the organization–public relationships of companies (state-owned, private, and multinational) operating in China with their publics during corporate philanthropic process. Nineteen participants from the companies and NGOs were interviewed. The results of this study offer public relations practitioners and educators a picture of the forms, motivations, characteristics, and environment of corporate philanthropy in China, and the relationship types, cultivation strategies, and outcomes that companies built with their publics after undertaking philanthropic activities.

The multinational companies (MNC) interviewed have more strategic philanthropic programs than their Chinese counterparts; Chinese companies can therefore learn from MNCs. The organizational economics, organizational characteristics, forms, and motivations of corporate philanthropy influence the relationships between the organizations (companies) and the publics, which were considered as relationship antecedents. Nineteen cultivation strategies were identified in corporate philanthropy in China; one new strategy, being an opinion leader, was proposed. Communal relationship, exchange relationship, contractual relationship, and covenantal relationship were relationship types that companies built with the publics when undertaking corporate philanthropy in China. For the qualities of relationship outcomes, a company's philanthropic programs usually led to positive outcomes, except in some isolated cases (e.g., scandals involving transparency problem with regards to donation or the media exposing that companies failed to donate as much as they promised). Control mutuality existed to some extent between companies and NGOs during cooperation. The different relationship-cultivation strategies led to different relationship outcomes. This study also summarized the cultivation strategies that lead to satisfaction, trust, commitment, and control mutuality, which could inspire practitioners when they undertake corporate philanthropic programs. The study concluded listing implications for public relations scholars, public relations practitioners, and companies in China that undertake corporate philanthropy or are planning to undertake corporate philanthropic programs in the future.

Literature Review

In today's world of integrated and interdependent economy, the relationship between business and society is complex (Lawrence & Weber, 2008). According to Steiner and Steiner (2008), business is a "profit-making activity that provides products and services to satisfy human needs" (p. 4). To be successful, a business must be responsible for both its economic and noneconomic environments —such as programs that aim to eradicate diseases, those that address the issue of domestic violence, and those that aim to boost employees' job skills— which are corporate philanthropic activities. However, for these projects to be sustainable, a win-win solution for the company and the society is what corporate philanthropic activities strive for. According to Sanchez (2000), as boundaries around corporate communication, public relations, community involvement, and social responsibility become increasingly blurred, philanthropy becomes better integrated with a firm's business activities. Corporations earn profit from the public and return a portion of it to help accelerate the society's sustainable development. Corporate philanthropy is an accepted mainstream practice under the umbrella term *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) (Scholder, Webb, & Mohr, 2006). In the evolving context of corporate philanthropy, corporate social philanthropy (which deals with a company's voluntary/discretionary relationship with its societal and community stakeholders) is a subset of corporate responsibility, which is "manifested in the strategies and operating practices a company develops in operationalizing its relationships with and impacts on societies, stakeholders and the natural environment" (Waddock, 2008, p. 52).

The scope, shape, and motivation behind corporate giving have changed dramatically in recent years (Benoiff & Alder, 2006). Therefore, know to conduct a corporate philanthropy properly for it to assist corporate competitive strategies is crucial for Chinese companies. This research aims to determine the relationship cultivations strategies, forms, motivations, and underlying principles of corporate philanthropy in China. In China, there are a growing number of corporate philanthropic activities, which gain the attention of consumers and are an important part of a corporation's social responsibility. These activities enable companies to contribute to the society. However, many issues exist (e.g., the legitimacy system of corporate philanthropy needs to be improved) and the development of corporate philanthropy in China lags severely behind those from developed economies. Corporations give away billions every year for philanthropic causes. Corporate philanthropic programs have their own budgets, guidelines, and even leaders to run them; further, a rationale and direction are needed for the institutionalized corporate organizations (Himmelstein, 1997). Intense global competition that require firms to heavily promote themselves and reductions in government allocations for social services are two international macroeconomic trends that add to the importance of corporate philanthropy (Sanchez, 2000). As corporate philanthropy helps firms gain brand recognition and loyalty, establishing them as "socially responsible" is an advantage (Sanchez, 2000). While there is a large body of literature on CSR, very few studies have focused on corporate philanthropy, especially in China. So far, a few studies on corporate philanthropy were conducted from the point of view of organizational–public relationship (OPR). Hall (2006) is one of the few who studied corporate philanthropy and OPRs by measuring customers' awareness and favorable rating of corporate philanthropy. There has also been considerable discussion on corporate philanthropy of profit-driven entities and how these nonmaterial and benevolent motives enhance their public image (Bock, Goldschmid, Millstein, & Scherer, 1984; Neiheisel, 1994; Useem, 1984). But none of these studies has focused on China. With China's increasingly visible role in the global economy, practitioners want to know more on this.

Very little communication-based research has been conducted on corporate philanthropy (Bennet, 1998; Hall, 2006; Lichtenstein, Drumwright, & Braig, 2004). Stole's study (2008) criticized cause marketing in her article "Philanthropy as Public Relations." After discussing the problems associated with cause marketing (e.g., deception), she calls enterprises to move from corporate charity to "strategic" philanthropy. Using a qualitative method, this study answers the underlying principles of corporate philanthropy in China and the relationships companies undertake philanthropic programs build with their stakeholders. It also explores the relationship

between stakeholders (e.g., government) and corporations under corporate philanthropy; how this relationship cultivates specific strategies, and what are the outcomes of this company–public relationship.

This study

This study also investigates the current state of corporate philanthropy in China—the reasons, forms, and underlying principles. This is an important issue because corporate philanthropy in China, especially in terms of its practical knowledge and experience, lags behind developed economies (*Annual Report on Enterprise Citizenship*, 2009). Therefore, the results of study will be useful for both public relations scholars and professionals, especially for those who work or have interest in China and who attempt to develop, maintain, and evaluate relationships with publics of their organizations through corporate philanthropy; for multinational companies that want to undertake corporate philanthropy and build public relationships in China; for Chinese companies who plan to or have already undertaken philanthropic activities. This study also suggests a balanced way on how to achieve sustainable development that is beneficial for both corporations and the society. This study provides an exploration at public relations in the international area for scholars who intend to study OPRs from a qualitative research perspective. The research questions are: What are the forms and motivations of corporate philanthropy in China? What type of relationships, relationship-cultivation strategies and relationship outcomes did corporations develop with their publics (e.g., NGOs, customers, employees, government, and community members) in the corporate philanthropic process in China? Given the Chinese commercial and political environment's impact on building relationships (OPRs), how do corporations in China undertake corporate philanthropy?

Results

For the results of the study, all the major forms of corporate philanthropy in the literature review have been found: Loans of employees/equipment and advertising in philanthropic activity have not been mentioned; Charitable donations (direct donations, establishing scholarship programs, and buying things first then donating them); Strategic philanthropy (in-kind contributions and volunteer services); Community contributions; Corporate sponsorship; and Internal and external communication of corporate philanthropy. Most companies have societal reasons, including all the small companies and most of the big companies. MNCs cited business reasons or long-term benefits for the companies. Different kinds of companies in China have different characteristics of corporate philanthropy. As China is a huge country, an MNC has decentralized management, which makes it difficult for them to have the same culture/program of corporate philanthropy. Most companies used the top-down approach when they donate. Some corporate philanthropic activities originate from the workers' union, or the branches of Communist Party members' committee and the Communist Youth League of China within a company. Corporate philanthropy often focuses on crisis and disaster relief, farmers and migrant workers' well-being, and education. The Chinese government plays an advocacy role in corporate philanthropy. MNCs and social enterprises consider corporate philanthropy as part of their business Strategies. Symmetrical strategies: Access, Positivity, Openness and disclosure, Assurance of legitimacy, Networking, Sharing of tasks, Some dual concern strategies, Cooperative, Promise keeping, Stewardship, Continued dialogue/patience Listening, Organizational credibility, Personal relationships, Face-to-face communication, and Educational communication are found during corporate philanthropy in China. Asymmetrical strategies: Some dual concern strategies: Accommodating (media); Social accommodation and Political accommodation; and Visible leadership are found during corporate philanthropy in China. Most companies do not have a formal program to evaluate their relationship outcomes; only a few MNCs evaluate their short-term programs. The manager of a social enterprise said that they have annual meetings and weekly employee meetings to evaluate their programs. Most of the participants were satisfied with the relationships.

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