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STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT IN CHINA

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Cen Yue

In Partial Fulfillment of the

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of

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ABSTRACT

Yue, Cen. M.A., Purdue University, December 2016. Strategic Public Relations Management in China. Major Professor: Krishnamurthy Sriramesh.

The purpose of this study was to explore the current status of strategic public relations management in China. This study is the first to apply the generic principles of excellent public relations in China. Surveys and in-depth interviews were used to address five research questions related to: (1) practitioners' strategic public relations practice, (2) their relationship with the dominant coalition, (3) public relations models in use, (4) proficiency in practicing the managerial and technical roles, and (5) the challenges facing the public relations industry. The study results suggested that public relations was seldom managed in a strategic manner in China. In specific, the public relations department: (1) was mostly involved in the technician role and not in organizational policy making, (2) was not a member of the dominant coalitions, did not have convenient reporting lines to senior management, and was considered less valuable than marketing and public affairs by senior management, (3) the press agentry model was the most prominently used in China – in agreement with previous literature – whereas two-way symmetrical communications was not practiced frequently, and (4) that the current knowledge in how to manage seems insufficient, the profession faces challenges in recruiting qualified

public relations talent, building good agency-clients relationships, and better utilizing digital media.

CHAPTER 1. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE OF STUDY

In today's globalized world, debates are still ongoing as to the extent to which public relations contributes to organizations' bottom lines. Alongside the unstoppable pace of globalization, public relations as a profession is expanding all over the world, creating more questions revolving around the essence and effectiveness of public relations in different contexts.

As a profession, western public relations was first seen in China in the 1980s (Chen, 1996; He & Xie, 2009). Since then, it has been growing exponentially due to the expansion of multinational corporations in China and the rapid development of domestic enterprises. As a result, public relations talents equipped with good communication and management skills are in great demand. Despite being an economically powerful country and experiencing an increase in the public relations market, academic research on Chinese public relations lags behind. Only a handful of empirical studies have been dedicated to understanding the big picture of strategic public relations management and the status of public relations in China (Chen, 1996; Ngai & Ng, 2013; Zhang, Shen, & Jiang, 2009). This can be explained by two reasons. First, public relations education started relatively late in China compared to the United States. Shenzhen University was the first in China to offer a public relations program in 1994 (Chen, 1994). Compare this to the U.S., where Edward Bernays taught the first public relations course at New York

University in 1923 (Smith, 2001). Boston University was the first to start a university-level degree in public relations in 1947. Second, one of the dominant public relations theories—Excellence Theory—was dependent on western empirical evidence.

Sriramesh and Verčič (2002) expressed their concern more than a decade ago that the lack of empirical studies from different parts of the world would hamper public relations scholarship and practice. To combat the ethnocentricity of public relations research in the U.S. and Western European countries, they urged scholars to gather more "case studies in international public relations" (p. 103). Although a growing number of global public relations studies have been completed, there is still "a dire need for greater numbers of studies from different socio-cultural environments" (Sriramesh, Rhee, & Sung, 2013, p. 121).

Under these circumstances, the present study aimed to expand the body of knowledge in global public relations by studying whether public relations is managed strategically in China and whether it contributes to organizational policy making. If not managed strategically, the study also intended to explore the challenges for failing to do so. This study enriches scholarship in global public relations and strategic communication by gathering empirical evidence from a different cultural setting than what is currently considered in the literature. Looking ahead, comparisons can be made across different cultures in order to build theories of global public relations. This study will offer a detailed analysis of the current state of strategic public relations management in China. It is beneficial for public relations practitioners to draw similarities and differences among public relations practice in different culture so that they can manage public relations adaptively to achieve optimum organizational effectiveness. Furthermore, global public

relations practitioners will find this study valuable when entering into Chinese markets and implementing public relations activities in China.

Chapter 2, a review of literature, consists of three major parts. The first section provides the background of public relations development in China. The second section illustrates the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis—generic principles of public relations and global applications of these principles. The third part of the literature review elaborates on the four generic principles most relevant to strategic public relations management, and examines the extant application of these principles in China. The ensuing chapter on methodology describes the survey questionnaire and interview protocols to be used to glean data. Survey samples will be collected across four social sectors — corporations, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations and public relations consulting firms. The study will also explore the opinions of public relations practitioners through in-depth interviews.

CHAPTER 2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Public relations in China

According to Chinese public relations scholars (Chen, 1996; He & Xie, 2009), public relations was introduced to China in the early 1980s. The import of the profession was indebted significantly to the political changes in the late 1970s after the end of the Great Cultural Revolution and the reform and opening-up policy that was made possible by new Party leader Deng Xiaoping. The profession has gone through some ups and downs since then. Chen (1996) summarized three stages of public relations development in China during this period of time.

During the first stage - roughly from 1980 to1985 - foreign corporations and Sino-foreign joint ventures were among the first to establish public relations departments in organizations, especially in the restaurant and hotel industries. According to He and Xie (2009), Hill & Knowlton and Burson-Marsteller entered the Chinese market in 1984 and 1985 as internationally renowned PR agencies. Among state-owned enterprises, Guangzhou Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical Factory was a pioneer in setting up a public relations department. Despite the increasing awareness and popularity of this field, the introduction phase also witnessed people's misunderstanding of and confusion about the profession.

From 1986 to 1989, which was seen as the "upsurge" phase, public relations departments and associations rocketed. The first 10 years saw a rapid growth in public relations agencies and educational institutions, despite the small size of most Chinese public relations departments or firms (between 10 and 20 employees).

Public relations started to enter into the third phase - the "rethinking phase" - in 1989. Public relations as a field of specialization was under close surveillance by the Chinese government at this time. As a result of the 1989 student prodemocracy movement, famously known as the Tiananmen Square Incident, the government was sensitive to western ideology and its influence in China. The Chinese government claimed that public relations, a profession imported from the western world, should be practiced in accordance with China's unique features. In other words, public relations was required to follow the Party and the government. The Asian economic crisis in the mid-90s worsened the industry's development. It was documented that about "one third of the PR departments in large business organizations were eliminated" (Chen & Culbertson, 2009, p.195).

Luckily, the "reform and opening-up" policy initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1992 opened the door for public relations to move more freely within the socialist market economy system. Since then, the public relations industry in China has revived and, to date, has maintained a strong momentum.

China's main professional associations for public relations are The China International Public Relations Association (CIPRA) and Public Relations Society of China (PRSC). CIPRA, established in April 1991, is a national organization dedicated to promoting public relations' practical and theoretical development in China. CIPRA has

contributed to defining public relations as a recognized occupation within the national occupational classification record (Chen & Culbertson, 2009). The Annual China Public Relations Investigation Report, led by CIPRA, reflects industry dynamics year by year and provides guidelines to professional institutions.

The PRSC, founded in August 2015, is a new division of the Chinese Association for History of Journalism and Mass Communication. Led by Chinese public relations scholar Dr. Chen Xianhong, PRSC will hold the first annual conference in Hong Kong Baptist University in December 2016. The PRSC committee included six missions at its inception, including translating and publishing a set of global and local-oriented public relations books, launching high-end public relations educational training programs, and hosting academic conferences both abroad and at home.

According to CIPRA, the public relations market in China increased from 45 billion to 430 billion U.S. dollars from 2004 to 2014, with a year-over-year increase rate of 13.2% in 2015. Jerry Olszewski, Chief Client Officer of Ketchum opined that, "China is easily the most dynamic PR market in the world" (PR Week, 2006, p. 24). The growth largely stemmed from an increasing number of foreign clients requesting a sophisticated level of service in China, and Chinese enterprises' commitment to using public relations at home and abroad.

Aside from corporations, Chinese governmental agencies and non-profit organizations now employ more public relations services. Chen's (2009) study showed that public relations is instituted as a government function "for information dissemination, image/reputation building, and also as a substitute for 'propaganda'" (p. 189). The nation- and city-image branding also demands an emphasis on public relations as a

publicity tool. More frequently than before, public relations or crisis communication leaders can secure a position in the dominant coalition in government crisis management. According to CIPRA, the increased emphasis of public relations from governments and non-profit organizations would be instrumental in bolstering the public relations industry in China.

Though public relations has gained increasing importance in the most recent decade, its function "remained largely unknown in China until the late 1980s" (Zhang, Jiang, & Luo, 1996). Public relations research took off in the early 1990s, focusing primarily on relationship management, governmental relations, crisis communication, and so on. Xue and Yu (2009) reviewed the public relations literature in China from 1999 to 2008. They found that from 1999 to 2008, industrial public relations dominated the literature, accounting for 22% of the total number of the publications. Research on public relations management (14%) followed behind. The researchers concluded that public relations research was more market-oriented and application-oriented compared to theoretical development during the period from 1999 to 2008. Additionally, qualitative research overwhelmed quantitative research as the primary research method.

Some Chinese public relations scholars have reflected on the strategic role of public relations in organizations. He and Xie (2009) addressed the essential role of public relations in building relationships between organizations and their publics. They opposed stereotyping public relations functions solely as image building. They argued that public relations' major contribution lies in building "organizational culture", enhancing "quality of their own organizations" and "the process of democratization" (p. 5). Unfortunately,

scholars have not elaborated on how the strategic public relations function can be achieved and to what extent this function has been realized in China.

After a thorough review of relevant literature in English and Mandarin, it appears that only a handful of empirical studies have been devoted to exploring whether, and to what extent, Chinese public relations is strategically contributing to organizational policy making. Ni (2006) noted that practitioners in small corporations were only taking on a technician role[1] and that publicity was a major component of their everyday work. However, in large corporations, practitioners were more likely to strategically engage in planning and building corporate culture. The same notion was acknowledged by Ngai and Ng (2013). Through a series of interviews with seasoned public relations and/or corporate communication (hereafter PR/CC) professionals in China and Hong Kong, they concluded that it is large-scale companies, especially multinational organizations that are fulfilling the strategic function of public relations and corporate communication. As for small to medium-sized organizations, they are essentially media or market focused. In the same study, senior PR/CC practitioners discussed their expectation to move up in an organization's hierarchy so as to contribute to strategic planning and policy making. Zhang and colleagues (2009) stated that the public relations industry in China is evolving towards a more strategic management direction. This conclusion was drawn from several interviews with public relations practitioners, one of whom noted that public relations' value lay in identifying and communicating with strategic stakeholders. Although of certain reference value, this study did not have a clear definition of strategic public

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[1] Practitioners who practice technician role are not involved in developing strategies and solving problems, but primarily deal with the technical skill of writing news releases and managing social media accounts, etc.

relations management. Neither did these authors operationalize the concept of strategic

public relations management. Without proper theorizing or operationalizing, the

interview information obtained from public relations practitioners might be one-sided and

therefore fail to predict or generalize the conclusion. Therefore, it is legitimate to doubt

their conclusion that the Chinese public relations industry "has been moving from

branding, image building, IMC, and media relations toward Chinese strategic

management" (p. 228). [2]

It is worth noting that the majority of scholars who have studied Chinese public

relations were educated in the United States. Their definition of excellence in public

relations could be based on common notions perceived and debated by U.S. public

relations scholars. This ethnocentric focus might compromise the possibility of finding

other excellence elements that may only be featured in non-western countries and

cultures including Chinese culture. As Curtin and Gaither (2005) stressed, "Western

corporate practice provides only one set of possible articulations" (p. 108).

Prominent Chinese cultural features such as "guanxi" and "saving face" are

evident in Chinese society and thus, were considered in this study. Prior to this study,

many public relations scholars have studied and discussed "guanxi" (Chen, 1996; Huang,

2000; Zhang et al., 2009), which consists of gift giving and building reciprocal

relationships through one's social networks, and exists in every walk of life. Without

guanxi, individuals and organizations can seldom achieve their goals, be they getting a

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[2] Interestingly, in reference to the generic principles which will be explicated in the next section, evidence from the same article actually contradicted the claim of strategic evolvement of Chinese public relations. For example, the fact of public relations' subordination to marketing and sales functions and the primary focus of public relations on media relations are strong indicators that public relations has not moved towards strategic management in China.

job, or implementing major corporate initiatives. Guanxi can be seen as using personal relationships to maximize one's ends.

"Saving face" is another cultural idiosyncrasy evident in China. Chinese people do not like losing face because "face" represents personal dignity. They would feel particularly offended if they are being confronted and doubted, known as "losing face" in front of people, including strangers. Therefore, saving face is necessary and important. On a positive note, it motivates people to work hard in order to be valued by society. However, excessive reliance on other people's opinions can be dangerous. From the country, to company, and family, it is a common maneuver to conceal unpleasant facts or sugarcoat mistakes in order to preserve face. The old Chinese saying, "Do not wash your dirty linen in public" warns people to keep personal quarrels behind closed doors.

In general, the extant empirical studies on strategic public relations management in China are lacking in number, vague in conceptualization, restricted in methodological approach, and not generalizable in conclusions. It is hoped that by using validated principles, clearer definitions, and a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, more comprehensive and useful conclusions and recommendations can be drawn. In the next section, the theoretical underpinnings for this study are explained.

2.2   Characteristics of excellence in public relations and generic principles

2.2.1   An overview of the fourteen characteristics of public relations excellence

A systematic exploration of excellence in public relations, known as the Excellence study, began in 1985, when a research team headed by James E. Grunig and funded by the Foundation of the International Association of Business Communication (IABC) endeavored to understand the best practices in public relations in three countries:

The United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Based on surveys and interviews with practitioners from 326 organizations, the research team (David, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995) identified fourteen characteristics of excellent public relations programs. These fourteen characteristics are listed as follows:

1. Public relations is managed strategically.

2. Public relations is practiced in a single or integrated public relations department.

3. Public relations is a separate function from marketing.

4. Public relations has a direct reporting relationship to senior management.

5. Public relations applies a two-way symmetrical model.

6. A senior public relations practitioner takes on a managerial role.

7. Public relations practitioners have knowledge of the symmetrical model and managerial roles, have academic training in public relations, and maintain professionalism.

8. There is equal opportunity for men and women in public relations.

9. The worldview for public relations in the organization reflects the two-way symmetrical model.

10. The public relations director has power in, or with, the dominant coalition.

11. Public relations is embedded in a participative, rather than authoritarian, organizational culture.

12. Internal communication is symmetrically practiced.

13. Public relations is embedded in an organic rather than mechanical organizational structure.

14. A turbulent, complex environment with pressure from activist groups

stimulates organizations to develop an excellent public relations function.

Excellent public relations contributes to organizational effectiveness by building quality, long-term relationships with an organization's key stakeholders. The Excellence theory held that by practicing excellent public relations, organizations could meet their goals by effectively communicating with stakeholders. Moreover, the costs of litigation, regulation, and pressure from the public in face of crisis could be avoided beforehand due to the proactive movement of public relations.

The Excellence study has been recognized for providing an overarching guidance for public relations scholarships and shedding light on subsequent research such as the generic principles of public relations (Verčič, Grunig, & Grunig, 1996). Ten generic principles derived from the fourteen characteristics of excellent public relations programs will be illustrated in the next section.

2.2.2 Generic Principles relevant to global public relations studies

Verčič et al. (1996) proposed a normative model of global public relations. They extracted ten generic principles from the fourteen indicators of excellence, concluding that these principles were applicable globally even though some environmental variables need to be taken into account to fit local contexts. The environmental variables consist of political systems, economics, culture, media, level of development and activism. Integrating a set of universally applicable principles with specific applications, the model was popularly referred to as the "global theory of public relations", or the "normative theory of global public relations" (Grunig, 2009, p. 1; Grunig, Grunig, & Verčič, 1998, p. 341). The ten generic principles are as follows (Grunig et al., 1998):

1. *Involvement of public relations in strategic management.* An organization that
   practices public relations strategically develops programs to communicate
   with strategic publics, both external and internal, that provide the greatest
   threats to, and opportunities for, the organization.

2. *Empowerment of public relations in the dominant coalition or a direct
   reporting relationship to senior management.* For public relations to be
   effective, senior public relations practitioners need to be members of the
   dominant coalition, also called the senior management team, or at least have
   access to voice concerns to the dominant coalition.

3. *Integrated public relations function.* All public relations functions should be
   organized under one department or at least have mechanisms to coordinate
   effectively with different departments.

4. *Public relations as a management function, separate from other functions.*
   Excellent public relations departments should be independent from marketing,
   human resources, finance, or other organizational functions. Only by being
   functionally independent could public relations identify all key stakeholders
   and develop public relations activities strategically.

5. *The public relations unit is headed by a manager rather than a technician.*
   Excellent public relations departments should have manager(s) in charge of
   strategic planning for the organization's communication activities. Managers
   should direct the unit rather than provide technical services or carry out
   administrative routines.

6. *The two-way symmetrical model of public relations is used.* Excellent public relations departments use formal or informal research to understand and communicate with publics. The aim of doing research is not to persuade the public to conform to organizations, but for better understanding, relationship-building, and conflict-solving between organizations and publics.

7. *Department with the knowledge needed to practice the managerial role and symmetrical public relations.* Excellent public relations departments contain professionals who have management knowledge and research skills.

8. *A symmetrical system of internal communication.* Excellent organizations practice symmetrical communication with employees. Organizations with organic and decentralized structures give employees a greater stake in decision making and therefore increase job satisfaction.

9. *Diversity embodied in all roles*. Excellent public relations departments include both men and women, and different ethnic groups in all roles.

10. *An organizational context for excellence.* Excellent public relations is more likely to be found in an organic and participative organizational culture. Activists embedded in chaotic external environments can push organizations towards excellence (pp. 337-339).

The normative model of global public relations (Verčič et al., 1996) is one of the fundamental achievements in public relations scholarship. A myriad of public relations scholars have applied the model to both public relations and public affairs arenas across different types of organizations globally. The empirical studies many scholars conducted were indebted to the Excellence study and the normative model of global public relations

(Likely, 2013; Lim, Goh, & Sriramesh, 2005; Oksiutycz & Enombo, 2011; Rhee, 2002; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009; Valentini, 2013; Valentini & Sriramesh, 2014). For example, Rhee (2002) was the first to test the applicability of generic principles in an Asian country—South Korea. Other scholars explored whether public relations is strategically managed in various countries by applying the generic principles (Lim et al., 2005; Oksiutycz & Enombo, 2011; Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009; Valentini & Sriramesh, 2014). Sriramesh and Verčič's (2003, 2009) compilation, a book that includes public relations case studies from more than 50 countries, provides an overview of the global public relations landscape.

According to the Excellence research team (J. Grunig, 1992), four principles deserve particular attention because they address the key aspects of strategic management of public relations. The validity and global applicability of the four generic principles have been tested in cases of Singapore, South Korea, Italy, Gabon, and Canada (Likely, 2013; Lim et al., 2005; Oksiutycz & Enombo, 2011; Rhee, 2002). The four principles are listed below and will be discussed in greater detail in the next section:

1. The involvement of public relations in strategic management;

2. The empowerment of public relations in the dominant coalition or a direct reporting relationship to the senior management;

3. The use of a two-way symmetrical model of public relations;

4. The possession of knowledge for practicing managerial roles and the symmetrical public relations model.

Ever since the conception of the generic principles, their applicability has been testified across countries. For example, Kaur (1997) found the generic principles were

applicable in Malaysia. Researchers demonstrated that the same principles cluster into an Index of Excellence in Slovenian organizations even after the country had gone through dramatic political and economic change (Grunig et al., 1998). Rhee (2002) applied the above four principles to the public relations profession in South Korea. Her research indicated that the principles she examined were applicable in South Korea where the culture differed considerably from that of western countries.

Lim et al. (2005) applied the same four generic principles of public relations in Singapore to explore the extent to which excellent public relations was practiced in that city-state. Based on a quantitative survey and several interviews with public relations practitioners at different seniority levels, the authors found that Singapore had not committed to excellent public relations. They concluded that public relations practitioners served more as technicians rather than managers.

Valentini (2013) used the first three principles to examine whether Italian public administration practiced strategic public administration management. The majority of public communication officers did not strategically contribute to organizational effectiveness, but rather followed routine (technical) practices. In concert with the later findings by Valentini and Sriramesh (2014), years of experience was related to officers' involvement in strategic public administration management. The level of involvement in strategic management reported by practitioners increased with seniority. Seasoned practitioners were more likely to consider themselves participating in the strategic management of the organization.

Valentini and Sriramesh (2014) contributed to building a global theory of public relations by investigating Italy's practice of strategic public relations. Their study focused

on the four generic principles that were most related to strategic management. The researchers sampled from corporations (including public relations departments and public relations agencies), government agencies, and non-profit organizations in order to explore the differences in strategic public relations management across the three sectors. They concluded that, in Italy, public relations was not strategically practiced.

In brief, a number of global studies have been carried out over the years examining the applicability of the generic principles. It has been shown that the four generic principles are effective instruments by which to determine the level of strategic public relations management in different countries. As Rhee (2002) recommended, cross-cultural replication of these findings will advance the development of a global theory of public relations. Therefore, this study aims to explore strategic public relations management in China in light of the four generic principles.

2.3   Four generic principles relevant to this study

This section will focus on elaborating the four principles that are deemed to be most relevant to strategic public relations management. In addition, prior research on public relations practices in China, which are specifically related to each of the four principles, will also be highlighted at the end of each section.

2.3.1   Involving public relations in strategic management

Historically, public relations has been considered a technical profession, and one practiced primarily for publicity purposes. The limited understanding of public relations functions is not only found among industry outsiders, but also in the senior management of organizations and public relations practitioners themselves.

Some researchers have termed the technical function of public relations a "symbolic paradigm" (Grunig & Kim, 2011), or an "interpretive" function. Taken literally, technical public relations focuses primarily on disseminating messages, building good organizational images, and interpreting the meaning created by senior management. In other words, public relations, solely or mainly, practicing technical activities is restricted to policy implementation, rather than actively participating in managerial decision-making. In organizations with a worldview of technical public relations, it is not sufficiently valued to be involved in forming organizational strategy. Technical public relations is widely applied among organizations that employ public relations to lower standards, and that believe messaging, or publicity, is the most valuable function of their public relations department. A similar distinction can be found in Bosch and Van Riel's (1998) classification of public relations functions. They proposed that the role of public relations could be buffering, bridging, or both. Public relations as a bridging function mediates the conflicts between the organization and its strategic publics so as to build long-term relationships. Conversely, a buffering strategy of public relations, much like technical public relations, is merely dedicated to message framing and dissemination so that organizations could buffer from their stakeholders.[3]

In comparison, public relations involved in strategic management does much more than publicity. Strategic public relations takes on the duty to perform environmental scanning, stakeholder identification, issue management, strategic planning, relationship

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[3] It should be noted that the behavioral paradigm (bridging function) does not contradict the symbolic paradigm (buffering function) in its entirety as the former also includes message creation and dissemination, among its broader acknowledgement of public relations in relationship building and managerial decision-making.

building, and evaluation (Dozier & Broom, 1995; Grunig, 2011). Moreover, strategic practice of public relations entails stakeholder engagement – actively addressing stakeholders' expectations and involving stakeholders' input in the process of organizational strategy making (Sethi, 1975). To make enable stakeholders to co-create organizational strategy with top management, public relations needs to be empowered to bring out stakeholders' valuable input in the first place. A concrete discussion on the duties of strategic public relations is illustrated in the next few paragraphs.

As many scholars have argued (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Dozier & Broom, 1995; Grunig et al., 1992), strategic public relations should serve as organizations' boundary scanners so as to identify issues and stakeholders in and out of organizations, ultimately building solid and long-term relationships with stakeholders. In Wakefield's (2000) "world-class" public relations model, the "advanced evolution stage" (AE) of the "world-class" public relations is the ideal stage, among the four stages he proposed. He predicted that public relations would be most likely to be successful worldwide if it is in the AE stage, which centers on fulfilling its strategic management role through proactive planning and relationship building with organizations' stakeholders.[4]

Strategic public relations activities involve constantly scanning internal and external environments, identifying key stakeholders, and interpreting the context in which organizations are involved. Invernizzi and Romenti (2011) viewed environmental scanning as a "central theme in strategic management studies" (p. 15). Environmental

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[4] Wakefield's (2000) "world-class" public relations model drew lessons from the failure of Coca-Cola's public relations' crisis in Belgium in 1992, and was built upon the 1998 Edelman Worldwide study, as well as the Excellence study. The excellence notion, such as empowering public relations in the dominant coalition, separating public relations functions from marketing, and equipping practitioners with professional knowledge were all embodied in the AE stage of the "world-class" public relations model.

scanning is a dynamic and mobile process because stakeholders may emerge and disappear in different stages of an issue. Stakeholders are people or groups that affect organizations, or those who bear the consequences of organizational behaviors (Freeman, 1984). By clearly identifying and segmenting stakeholders, organizations can implement different strategies targeting stakeholders in different stages of an issue. Organizations will find environmental scanning particularly useful to prevent issues from escalating to crisis. For example, a latent public, which originally had low involvement and interest in a particular issue, might escalate to become an aware/aroused public if they are extensively exposed to that issue. In the same vein, an already aroused or active public is likely to engage in collective action, such as activist activities, as time goes by. Organizations must therefore use public relations to monitor the changing environment, make proactive adjustments, and prevent crises from happening.

The ultimate goal of environmental scanning is to actualize public relations' bridging function between key stakeholders and the organization as well as coordinating symmetrical communication from both sides. Besides voicing an organization's messages accurately and promptly to the public, strategic public relations should consciously remind senior managers of the need to incorporate stakeholders' feedback, regardless of whether it is positive, neutral, or oppositional towards an organization's initiatives.

It should be noted that environmental scanning is not a strategic activity in all instances; it can also be primarily technical. For example, "reading the popular and industry press and clipping articles about the organization and issues important to the organization" is not strategic in its entirety (White & Dozier, 1992, p. 101). Neither is it strategic to "put newspaper and magazine clips about the organization in a folder for

decision makers to review" (White & Dozier, 1992, p. 102). Invernizzi and Romenti (2011) advanced a similar commentary on the boundary-spanning role of strategic communication. They held that only by attaching meaning to information can spanners contribute to organizational excellence, and they called the process of interpretation of information "sense-making", originally derived from Weick (1995).

Nevertheless, one threat may arise for practitioners serving as an organization's boundary spanners. As active spanners, public relations practitioners are supposed to report issues of importance, including opportunities and potential threats that they gathered from the environment, to senior management. Moreover, if necessary, excellent public relations is expected to take the initiative to urge changes from the senior management. Due to this reason, conflicts may arise between public relations practitioners and organizations' decision makers because decision makers can be reluctant to change their behaviors (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002) also pointed out that an organization's decisions, made by top managers, are primarily aimed at maintaining the status quo and their power in the dominant coalition. Even though it may first appear to be a disadvantage for public relations professionals, given the fact that they may suffer from hostility and suspicion from top leaders, scholars still maintain that public relations practitioners could gradually change the biased perception of the management team by continuously offering constructive suggestions (White & Dozier, 1992).

Different responsibilities taken on by practitioners lead to various forms of role enactments. Dozier and Broom (1995) assigned the "manager role" to practitioners who practice managerial public relations and the "technician role" to those who practice

technical public relations. Extending this classic treatment of public relations' role enactment, Steyn (2009) added a new role called "public relations strategist". According to Steyn, public relations strategists differ from public relations managers because strategists are an integral part of strategy formation, while public relations managers act more on an operational and administrative level. Grunig (1992) claimed that for organizations to be excellent, they must have public relations managers. However, public relations is less likely to be effective if the managers only deal with administrative tasks. Steyn's newly added "public relations strategists" role seemed like an expansion of the traditional public relations' role enactment. But the duties assumed by strategists are essentially the same as those expected of public relations managers. According to Dozier and Broom, public relations managers should not be administrative leaders; rather, they are expected to strategically contribute to organizations through strategic planning, environmental scanning, scientific evaluation, and consulting management. Therefore, these researchers actually stand on the common ground as to whether there should be at least some public relations professionals who take on the strategic management role in the organization, notwithstanding different titles they offer.

When it comes to the positive outcomes of strategic public relations management, a myriad of scholars (Center & Jackson, 1995; Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006; Ferguson, 1984; Invernizzi & Romenti, 2011; Kim, Hung-Baesecke, Yang, & Grunig, 2013) unanimously pointed to relationship building, as an intangible indicator of organizational success. Verčič and colleagues (1996, p. 37) noted that quality relationships with key stakeholders, such as customers, investors, employees, and government officials can generate monetary value for organizations, and "reduce the costs of litigation, regulation,

and legislation" caused by bad relationships with opponents and activists. Management scholars also acknowledged "relationship" as one of the two intangible assets of organizations (Greco, Cricelli, & Grimaldi, 2013). Based on the preceding literature review, the first research question is framed as follows:

RQ 1: To what extent are Chinese public relations practitioners involved in the strategic management of the organization and contributing to organizational policies?

2.3.2 Involvement of public relations in dominant coalition

The term "dominant coalition" refers to organizations' decision makers. They establish goals and missions for organizations. Authors of the Excellence study asserted that in order to be strategically managed, public relations should have a say in an organization's dominant coalition.

Being involved in the dominant coalition or supported by top management elevates public relations' status in an organization, thereby gaining significant weight in dictating an organization's maneuverings. Research shows that public relations professionals greatly value their actual status and the support they receive in their organization. In a study exploring the factors related to professional success in public relations, one high-level public relations executive stated, "Ninety-nine percent of your ability to influence is having a boss who supports you by pushing you to the [decision-making] table" (Berger et al., 2007, p. 65). The authors also reported that the highest percentage of respondents (22.7%) in this study believed that their success was measured by taking a decision-making position, a category that includes securing a seat in the

dominant coalition, being trusted and accepted by management, and having an equal say
in decision making (p. 59).

Invernizzi and Romenti (2011) identified three dimensions along which strategic
communications can contribute to decision-making. In the first and second dimensions,
communication plays the "enabling" and "constructive" roles in organizational decision
making. However, it is in the third dimension, which they called "communication-
oriented organization", in which the communication function is most valued. For instance,
communication professionals would be consulted in every important decisional process at
both corporate and departmental levels. Two Italian organizations are given as examples
of "communication-oriented organizations". In the first case, the decision of including the
communication manager of Illycaffè in the "executive committee", which is the dominant
coalition of Illycaffè, was not made by the company's CEO single-handedly. The
demands also came from other division managers, who thought it would be useful to take
into account the professional advice provided by the communications department in their
daily operation. In the case of an Italian bank, Banca Monte dei Paschi (BMPS), every
divisional decision that will be exposed to the public, such as a new product launch or
new marketing plan, must be approved by the CCO. Both cases represented the highest
empowerment of communications functions in the organizations.

Nevertheless, simply securing a seat in the dominant coalition cannot guarantee
that public relations' perspectives would be truly valued by decision makers. Showing up
at the decision table does not equate to participating in decision making. This statement
holds true especially if public relations managers had little voice or this function was
subordinated to other divisions, such as marketing and advertising. For instance, a senior

US practitioner in DeSanto and Moss's study (2005) disclosed that the main reason for her to sit with top management is to be informed "where the business is going to go" (p. 187) so that the communication plans could follow the general corporate strategy. In some circumstances, dominant coalitions would allocate resources and money to public relations departments, but not empower this function to the extent of "seeking counsel in setting up organizational policies" (Lim et al., 2005, p. 327). Some practitioners did not feel it was a prerequisite to have a seat in the dominant coalition though it would help (Lim et al., 2005). Rather, they would be satisfied as long as their inputs are valued by the dominant coalition in making major organizational decisions. For them, their insights being taken into account in organizational decision-making is more important than having a membership in the dominant coalition or receiving monetary support. The above research findings were in accordance with Grunig et al.'s (2002) argument that public relations departments could still be excellent even though the head of the public relations is not a member of the dominant coalition. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that membership in the dominant coalition is an important, but not mandatory, condition for public relations to be excellent. No empirical study has ever been done to explore the relationship between public relations' departments' functions and dominant coalitions in China. One of the goals of this research is to fill the gap to discover the extent of public relations' membership in dominant coalitions, public relations' reporting lines to dominant coalitions, and the extent to which public relations' input was valued by dominant coalitions.

Prior studies have touched upon cultures' influence on public relations' membership or reporting line in the organization. For example, Sriramesh (1996)

referenced Hofstede's (1984) concept of power distance (PD) to study the dynamics of superior-subordinate relationships in India. Power distance refers to the extent to which the society is vertically stratified. It reflects different perceptions individuals have towards their role relationships with members of different status. Societies with high PD indexes like China, India and South Korea, tend to give superiors more power and authority, and subordinates accept this unequally distributed power. Understanding and acknowledging power distance in various cultures is critical for conducting public relations activities globally. For instance, when practicing public relations in China, practitioners from egalitarian societies such as the U.S. need to "show respect to leaders they feel they deserve" (Chen, 2009, p. 190). Otherwise, their way of communication could be interpreted as disrespectful and arrogant. Sriramesh found that high power distance is positively related to the difficulty for public relations to be part of the dominant coalition. Because of the constraints imposed by hierarchy and bureaucracy, public relations practitioners may find it hard to even be heard, much less, join, the dominant coalition. The second research question, then, was as follows:

RQ 2: What kinds of reporting lines do public relations departments in China have with members of the dominant coalition?

2.3.3   Knowledge

Practitioners' knowledge for conducting two-way symmetrical public relations and strategic management comprises the third area of interest in this study. Excellent public relations departments have practitioners who possess the theoretical body of knowledge in public relations (Verčič et al., 1996). The knowledge of two-way symmetrical public relations and strategic management not only refers to the practical

skills practitioners can use to conduct research and develop strategies, but also the knowledge to understand the value of strategic public relations and the importance of two-way communication.

Rhee's (2002) study showed that knowledge concerning the two-way symmetrical model and the managerial role were the most important contributors to the value of public relations in South Korea. Meng and Berger's (2013) leadership research shed light on qualities that would lead public relations professionals all the way up to the decision-making table. They concluded that those "who possess the competence and knowledge to deal with the environment" (p. 149), and who can persuasively sell solutions and ideas to the top management, would be valued and involved in decision-making. DeSanto and Moss (2005) arrived at a similar conclusion about the importance of competence, knowledge and personal charisma after interviews with public relations practitioners. Lim et al.'s (2005) study indicated that Singaporean practitioners' knowledge of managerial skills and two-way communication was insufficient, which disenabled them to conduct formal research or recognize the value of public relations in strategic management. They believed that public relations' low status in the organizations could be partially attributed to the lack of knowledge possessed by practitioners.

Communication skills and positive personal character traits were named as the two most important qualities by public relations leaders to be successful (Berger, Reber, & Heyman, 2007). The same study showed that few practitioners thought highly of managerial skills which were considered to be key by the Excellence study.

It has been asserted that public relations talent is lacking in China. Ten years ago, Jean-Michel Dumont, Chairman of Ruder Finn Asia, pointed out that "the sheer growth

of the Chinese PR market is creating a huge need for talent" (PR Week, 2006, p. 26). His

call for talent has not been adequately addressed in the public relations industry ten years

later. According to a recent CIPRA annual report (2016), the most credible public

relations industry report on public relations in China, a shortage of public relations talent

remains a bottleneck that hinders the entire industry's development. The intensive

demand for high-caliber public relations professionals derives partly from the rapid

growth of the public relations industry, as the recent CIPRA reports have already

demonstrated. In addition, competition from advertising, marketing, and organizations'

tendency of using integrated marketing communication has threatened the independent

practice of public relations. Therefore, it is pressing for public relations professionals to

enhance their knowledge and expertise to strengthen its irreplaceable function in

relationship building with stakeholders.

In terms of public relations education in China, public relations curriculum design

in China is heavily dependent on the U.S. paradigm (Zhang, Jiang, & Luo, 2012).

Sriramesh (2004) suggested that for public relations in Asia to grow, scholars should look

beyond the western paradigm of public relations and fully explore the richness of local

cultures and traditions.

The lack of indigenous concern also comes from within. For example, the

Ministry of Education (MOE) in China has not endorsed public relations as a legitimate

major. Zhang et al. (2012) attributed this undervaluation to two factors. First, MOE has a

limited knowledge of the functions of public relations. They still equate public relations

with publicity and propaganda. Second, the mindset to integrate journalism, advertising,

and public relations into one curriculum or unit deters public relations from developing into an independent and legitimate major.

Zhang et al. (2012) also stressed the ramifications of underestimating public relations as an independent major. Due to marginalization of public relations in universities, professors have little funding or motivation to advance the body of knowledge. Scholars struggle to establish top-tier academic journals in public relations. The poor public relations education system will doubtless discourage fewer talents from specializing in public relations management, therefore creating a larger gap between the current high demand for public relations talents and the low supply.

Providing professional and academic training in public relations will be the key factors that hasten the process of institutionalizing public relations, as there will be more well-trained professionals entering public relations industry.

In regards of the knowledge, the third research question was posed:

RQ 3: What knowledge do public relations practitioners in China possess to facilitate practicing the managerial role and two-way communication?

2.3.4   Two-way symmetrical public relations model

Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified four models of public relations that describe organizations' ways of carrying out communication functions: (1) press agentry model (2) public information model (3) two-way symmetrical model, and (4) two-way asymmetrical model. Among these, the two-way symmetrical model was thought to be the most effective model for achieving organizational goals.

The press agentry and public information models are both one-way communication models, with information flowing only from the organization to its

audiences. The core purpose for organizations using one-way communication models is to publicize or inform publics of organizational actions. This communication process is defined as one-way because it does not incorporate public feedback upon receiving organizational messages.

Both the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model involve research, albeit with different underlying motives. The organizational motive for implementing the two-way asymmetrical model is to persuade the public to do what organizations would like them to in terms of thinking or behavior. The two-way asymmetrical model shares similarity with the two-way symmetrical model at first blush, because both models involve information giving and information gathering. However, an organization's motive in persuading its audience determines whether the two-way asymmetrical model is in essence a persuasion model, just like the press agentry model. The motive for two-way asymmetrical communication is effective persuasion – convincing stakeholders of the attractiveness of the organization – rather than understanding and compromising (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Organizations using this model seek to hold ultimate control and refuse to share power with stakeholders.

In contrast, the two-way symmetrical model takes the stakeholders' voice into consideration in organizational decision-making. Organizations practicing the two-way symmetrical model truly value input from external and internal stakeholders. This model advocates a dialogue between organizations and stakeholders in search of mutually agreeable solutions that benefit both sides. Even though persuasion may happen, it is not a persuasion model, because both sides have equal opportunities to persuade the other to

change. The two-way symmetrical model goes a long way towards building quality and long-term relationships between organizations and publics.

Organizations' communicative intentions underlie whether they practice two-way symmetrical or two-way asymmetrical communication. Although the practice of both models entails research in order to gain accurate information from the environment, asymmetrical communication aims to persuade publics to do what organizations want them to think, or to do, just like propaganda (Verčič et al., 1996). In contrast, the two-way symmetrical model suggests that communication between an organization and its public should be based on mutual and sincere motives for the purposes of resolving conflict and cultivating good relationships.

One-way communication differs from two-way communication in not using research to glean internal and external information. Conversely, two-way communication features information-giving and gathering when dealing with the public (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Verčič and colleagues (1996) asserted that public relations should not be restricted to one-way information-giving. For effective communication to happen, it must be two-way. However, in reality, researchers have found that it is not uncommon that practitioners only practice one-way communication which means no research is done to collect stakeholders' input, an important factor being a lack of monetary support from clients (Verčič et al., 1996).

Wakefield (2000) used the terms "inside-out" communication and "outside-in" communication to describe the two different philosophies organizations take toward communicating with publics. Organizations with an "outside-in" mindset practice two-way communication. Communication is taken as a proactive activity that not only

involves sending messages to publics, but also bringing back feedback from publics to organizations, thusly contributing to organizational behavior in a strategic manner. Not only is the "outside-in" model two-way, it is also symmetrical, because organizations practicing this model would "find common ground for understanding" and "seek mutually beneficial relationships" with publics (p. 64). In contrast, the "inside-out" approach focuses only on media relations, product publicity, and image building. It is seen as a one-way philosophy in communicating with publics. Compared with an "outside-in" mindset, it is more reactive and less strategic.

Although not categorized as one of the four communication models, the "personal influence model", identified as the fifth model by Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang and Lyra (1995), was found to play a significant role in some cultures, such as Singapore, China, and South Korea. Personal influence, or "guanxi" in Chinese, meaning relationships and connections built on personal networks, was practiced extensively to deal with media relations and government relations in the above countries. Guanxi building (or *Gao Guanxi*) generally involves "favor-granting and favor-gaining" on an interpersonal level (Falconi, 2011).

Surveying the empirical evidence regarding the use of the public relations models, it can be seen that corporations most frequently practice the press agentry model, and government agencies, the public information model (Grunig et al., 1995). However, some exceptions do exist. Valentini (2013), for example, found that in Italian governmental administrations, none of the four models was more prevalent than the others, indicating that the public communication officers practiced a mixed-motive model instead.

Practitioners' understanding of two-way communication is perplexing. In Valentini and Sriramesh's study (2014), even though most practitioners agreed that their duties involved enhancing mutual understanding between publics and organizations, they did not believe managers should change or adjust their attitudes to the public. Nor did they believe that information about the public should be investigated thoroughly before the implementation of public relations campaigns. Resolving this paradoxical question relies on further empirical evidence.

One knowledge gap this research seeks to explore is which public relations models Chinese public relations practitioners employ. Literature exploring the public relations models practiced by Chinese public relations practitioners is lacking. Thirty years ago, Grunig and Hunt (1984) found that the central government in Beijing used the press agentry model much like propaganda. Later, Chen and Culbertson (2009, p. 197) found that two-way communication was practiced in local governments' initiatives in the 1980s. For instance, local government officials, like previous Tianjin mayor, Li Ruihuan, took various actions to gather information from the people. These actions included holding public meetings, launching annual surveys, and using media to gauge public opinion. In addition, the study asserted that some major commercial centers located in Southern China had started to practice the two-way communication more commonly. More recently, one study conducted in Greater China by Ngai and Ng (2013, p. 577) suggested that none of the eight senior PR/CC interviewees in their study acknowledged the importance of two-way communication strategies in mediating the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders.

Since two-way symmetrical communication is an important feature of excellent

public relations, this study aims to understand if it is being practiced in China. If evidence

of a two-way symmetrical public relations model is not found, the obstacles that prevent

practitioners from practicing it and the other public relations' models they practice will

be identified. The fourth research question is stated as follows:

  RQ 4: Which public relations models do Chinese public relations practitioners

     employ?

It is predictable that there are some challenges facing public relations industry in

China today. This study will explore what practitioners perceive to be the major

challenges that get in the way of public relations' involvement in strategic management

as well as the challenges they face in their daily practice of the profession. The fifth

research question was posed:

  RQ 5: What challenges do Chinese public relations practitioners face in terms of

     practicing strategic public relations management and contributing to

     policy making?

RQ 5 will take the first four research questions one step further by digging into

the sources of the challenges that practitioners face. By doing so, this study will help

explain why strategic public relations management either succeeds or fails.

Overall, this study will be the first to use the four generic principles related to

strategic management to study public relations in China, an economically powerful

country. A theory-based analysis of public relations management in China will not only

provide constructive direction and feedback to the rapidly growing public relations

industry, but also contribute significantly to the body of knowledge in global public relations.

Adapted from Valentini and Sriramesh (2014), Lim et al. (2005) and Rhee's (1999) paradigm, the following five research questions have been developed for this study.

RQ 1: To what extent are Chinese public relations practitioners involved in the strategic management of the organization and contributing to organizational policies?

RQ 2: What kinds of reporting lines do public relations departments in China have with members of the dominant coalition?

RQ 3: What knowledge do public relations practitioners in China possess to facilitate practicing the managerial role and two-way communication?

RQ 4: Which public relations models do Chinese public relations practitioners employ?

RQ 5: What challenges do Chinese public relations practitioners face in terms of practicing strategic public relations management and contributing to policy making?

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research method, sampling, research instruments and analytical tools used for this study.

The majority of previous studies about public relations in China have only used qualitative interviews (Chen, 2007; Liu, Chang, & Zhao, 2009; Ni, 2006; Ngai & Ng, 2013; Zhang et al., 2009; Zhang et al., 2015). For this study, both survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used to gather data to address the research questions. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied with the aim of (1) answering the questions above and (2) exploring the reasons that led to respondents' answers mostly through in-depth interviews.

The survey questionnaire used for this study was replicated from Lim et al.'s (2005) study on Singapore, but with some modifications to take into account the Chinese context. For instance, the example professional public relations organizations provided in survey question 17 were changed to PRSC and CIPRA since most Chinese organizations would be more likely to join Chinese public relations professional bodies. In addition, the education and salary categories were amended to align with those in China. The survey questionnaire was designed both in English and Chinese, so practitioners could choose the language they preferred.

Regarding the survey items, a total of 12 items in survey questions 5 and 6 measured the extent to which public relations is involved in strategic management and organizational policy-making (RQ1). Survey questions 1-4 asked what reporting lines public relations departments have with the members of the dominant coalition and about the empowerment of public relations departments (RQ2). Survey question 7 intended to assess the perceived value of public relations in hopes of providing a second answer to RQ2. Question 8 asked about the degree to which public relations models are practiced in their organizations. Question 9 asked practitioners to rate their knowledge level in practicing the managerial role and conducting the two-way public relations model. Questions 10-21 assessed respondents' demographics.

Snowball sampling was used for collecting quantitative data. Acquaintances working in public relations industries in China were asked to recommend other public relations practitioners to fill out the online survey. It is not feasible to conduct random sampling since there were no directories listing information of public relations professionals working in different types of organizations in China.

The questionnaire was put on Qualtrics, and 92 responses were valid for analysis. As reflected in Table 3.1, about 45 percent of all respondents had more than six years' working experience. The largest group (40%) were aged between 31 to 40 years. In terms of sex, the respondents were split almost down the middle with (49%) being female. Approximately 52 percent of all respondents had a bachelor's degree and a surprisingly large number (47%) also held a postgraduate degree (Masters, PhD). More than 91 percent of the respondents earned over 5,000 RMB per month. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China, the average monthly income in

2015 was 4,134 RMB ("Revenue," 2015, para. 8). A large percentage (77%) of

respondents indicated that their organizations or departments were not a member of any

professional bodies. Fourty-three worked for corporate public relations departments, 14

for government agencies, 4 NGOs/NPOs, and 14 worked for public relations agencies. 81

percent of respondents worked in a local organization, and 19 percent worked in a

multinational or international organization.

Beyond the quantitative data, this study utilized interviews to obtain a deeper

understanding about the experiences of public relations practitioners. According to

Edwards and Holland (2013), qualitative interviewing is a method "that can give insight

into the meanings that individuals and groups attach to experiences, social processes,

practices and events" (p. 90).

Using the same recruitment method, a total of 20 public relations practitioners

participated in the qualitative interviews. They were later asked to complete the same

survey questionnaire on Qualtrics. These practitioners, whose major responsibility was in

communication or public relations, were from a wide range of sectors. Eight of the

practitioners worked in corporations including business-to-business, consumer goods,

information technology, software development, and the car industry. Five people worked

in public relations or integrated marketing communication agencies. Three participants

were NGO working staffs. Three worked in government, and one was an experienced

university professor teaching public relations. There were 11 male and 9 female

interviewees. Six had more than 15 years' working experience in public relations, ten had

5-10 years' experience and four had fewer than 5 years' working experience. The titles of

the professionals differed due to the different business sectors in which they were

Table 3.1 Demographic Information of the Survey Respondents

Variable	Valid *N*	%
Gender	75	
Male	38	50.7
Female	37	49.3
Age (years)	75	
21–25	3	4.0
26–30	26	34.7
31–35	20	26.7
36–40	10	13.3
41–45	4	5.3
46+	12	16.0
Level of education	75	
Secondary	1	1.3
College (Bachelors)	39	52.0
Graduate (Masters, PhD)	35	46.7
Number of years in public relations	75	
<1	4	5.3
1–2	9	12.0
3–5	28	37.3
6–10	18	24.0
>10	16	21.3
Type of organization	75	
Corporation	43	57.3
Governmental agency	14	18.7
NGO/NPO	4	5.3
Public relations agency	14	18.7
Geographical orientation of the organization	75	
Local	61	81.3
Multinational/international	14	18.7
Member of a strong professional body	75	
Yes	17	22.7
No	58	77.3
Income per month (in RMB, before taxes)	75	
<5,000	7	9.3
5,000–10,000	18	24.0
10,001–15,000	18	24.0
15,001–20,000	10	13.3
20,001–25,000	4	5.3
25,001–30,000	5	6.7
>30,000	7	9.3
Chose not to disclose this information	6	8.0

Note. Only 72 respondents filled out the demographic information which was the last section of the survey, and *N*=92 everywhere else.

working and their number of years of working experience. A diversified collection of interview samples could aid in the interpretation of the quantitative data and provide deeper knowledge in response to the research questions. The organizations they worked in were all located in Beijing or Shanghai, the two biggest cities in China and the hubs of most government and economic activity.

The interviews sought answers to the following sample questions: What role does public relations play in organizations? Do public relations practitioners directly report to the senior management? To what extent do public relations practitioners think they are supported and valued by the senior management? What kind of public relations models do practitioners use to communicate with their publics and why? What do practitioners think the purpose of public relations is in their organizations? What cultural, economic, or political factors affect the way public relations is practiced in China? What are the challenges facing public relations practitioners in China on an organizational and industry level? A complete interview protocol can be found in Appendix C (English version) and Appendix D (Chinese version).

Interviews were conducted in Mandarin and primarily face-to-face in cafes or in the interviewees' offices, with a few conducted via Skype due to the busy schedules of the interviewees. The interviews took from 60 minutes to 120 minutes with 90 minutes being the average. All 20 interviews were audio recorded with the interviewees' permission.

The researcher transcribed all the 20 interviews. One hundred and thirty page single-spaced pages of data were generated. Marshall and Rossman's (1999) comparison analysis method was used to link data by constantly comparing and contrasting them. To

analyze the interview data, the researcher read the transcripts and determined different themes relevant to each RQ. Tables were created to sort each participant's quotations according to the topics. After reading the organized data and trying to understand what they meant in the context of the RQs, patterns were established.

It should be noted that due to the nature of RQ1-RQ4 concerning the status quo of public relations practice in China, they were addressed mainly with the survey findings but were supplemented with the interview results. Since the purpose of RQ5 was to identify and summarize the challenges of the industry, it was addressed through interview data.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

RQ 1: To what extent are Chinese public relations practitioners involved in the

strategic management of the organization and contributing to

organizational policies?

As with Lim et al. (2005)'s findings from Singapore, respondents in this study

rated their contribution to routine operations the highest (M = 4.09, SD = .96) and to

major social issues (e.g., crises, layoffs, fee hikes etc.) the second highest (M = 4.05, SD

= 1.01) (Table 4.1), a difference that was not statistically different (t = -.27, p = .79). Lim

et al. argued that it was paradoxical to simultaneously rate both routine operations and

response to major social issues highly and attributed the paradox to social desirability

bias "where respondents tend to choose highly desirable items in an attempt to project a

favorable image of themselves" (p. 323). However, regardless of people's allegedly

inflated perception of their influence, it is not necessarily a contradiction to assert that

public relations contributes to both routine operations and major social issues. While

public relations departments tend to concentrate on routine operations, they are also

capable of handling some crises should they occur.

What deserves more attention is public relation's absence from decision-making

when management develops organizational policies (M = 3.46, SD = 1.04). This item

was rated the lowest of all 12 items. Paralleling this finding, respondents also reported

that they contributed minimally to strategic planning ($M = 3.57$, $SD = .87$). The value

that senior managers placed on public relations practitioners' ability to make decisions or

help with strategic planning ability was not high ($M = 3.61$, $SD = .88$). Therefore, it can

be concluded that public relations plays only a minimal role in organizational policy-

making, especially when juxtaposed with its technical activities in these organizations.

Table 4.1 Means and Standard Deviations of Chinese Public Relations Practitioners' Involvement in
Strategic Management

Indicator	M	SD
We contribute to strategic planning.	3.57	0.87
We contribute in responding to major social issues (e.g.: crises, layoffs, fee hikes etc.).	4.05	1.01
We contribute to major initiatives (e.g.: mergers, acquisitions, new movements in markets, launch of new products/services.	3.65	0.99
We contribute in routine operations (e.g.: development and maintenance of employee communication, community relations or media relations program.	4.09	0.96
We conduct formal research (e.g.: from news clippings, Internet) for use in decision-making.	3.89	0.85
We conduct informal research (e.g.: informal interviews) for use in decision-making.	3.50	0.98
We help our management to develop goals and objectives in organizational mission and policies.	3.46	1.04
We help management to scan the environment and identify issues which may be potential threats or opportunities.	3.84	0.84
We help management to identify both internal and external strategic publics that affect the organization's mission and goals.	3.84	0.95
We have contacts with important publics (e.g.: analysts, economists, industry experts, government officials) outside the organization.	3.88	0.96
The management seeks our opinion in decision making or planning.	3.63	0.92
The management values our judgment in decision making or planning.	3.61	0.88

Note. N = 92. All items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*),
3 (*neutral*), 4 (*agree*), to 5 (*strongly agree*).

The interview data reinforced this finding. All five interviewees from public

relations agencies stated unanimously that the public relations function was not involved

in policy making in their clients' organizations based on their experience dealing with

clients from all walks of life. One experienced agency practitioner specializing in IT

clients claimed: "They [in-house PR] just have to think about how to implement the

strategy after it has been made by [the] dominant coalition." The head of two local public

relations agencies acknowledged that it is "important for in-house public relations to play

a part in decision making", yet expressed disappointment with the reality "[in contrast

with local organizations], foreign clients with whom I worked both understood and

valued the role of their public relations departments to a much greater extent".

Based on both the survey and the interviews, it appeared that organizational

policy makers rarely consulted with public relations practitioners unless practitioners

took the initiative to provide professional knowledge and insights. Two in-house

practitioners emphasized decision makers' inertia in following up with the public

relations teams about the dynamics of recent issues and stakeholders. According to the

head of marketing and public relations of a software company: "Public relations could

provide useful information, but it is not a prerequisite information source for our

company's management to make decisions." In an interview with the head of

communication of a non-profit hospital, it was found that extensive efforts to promote the

management's view of public relations by bottom-up reform had been made. She noted

the difference in her department before and after the reform: "Previously, the department

just implemented the order from the top, but gradually, I realized the department could do

more." The initiative they took included outsourcing to a data service company to

monitor public opinion on the Internet. The interviewee indicated "it was a rare maneuver

for most non-profit hospitals across the nation". The raw data would later be categorized

and interpreted by her team, relying on their professional knowledge in hospital

management and healthcare. She added: "I think environmental scanning is a very useful

tool. However, you really need to organize this information and make sense of the most

salient aspects." In addition to scanning and monitoring the hospital's environment strategically, she commented on the role of communication: "I feel like we should go beyond helping the hospital build a better brand." She realized that it was equally important for hospital management to be improved through communication, and to allow the public relations department to play a greater role in the decision and planning process.

Clearly, the initiative in this case had been implemented bottom up and, according to the head of communication, had received commendations from the hospital's leadership, who urged other hospital divisions to adjust their activities based on the feedback from the communication division. Nonetheless, bottom-up public relations innovation was not a frequent practice, and only two interviewees reported that they had carried out similar trials in their organizations.

In terms of organization, the interviews with public relations practitioners at NGOs led to some meaningful findings. For example, an interviewee from one NGO articulated that [NGOs] affiliation with the government plays a significant role in determining the extent to which public relations was involved in the organizational policy-making:

> Communications function in NGOs can be divided into three types, in accordance with [NGOs] affiliation with the government administrations. For NGOs entirely dependent on governmental funding, communication professionals had little say in organizational decision- making. The second type of NGOs were half market-driven, half administration-driven, and communication departments' autonomy varied case by case. For the third type of NGOs, which were completely market-driven, the communication function was more powerful and more valuable to

management than the other two types. Building good relationships with key

stakeholders is crucial to NGOs that are market-driven in that funds are collected

through various stakeholders rather than the government. Under this circumstance,

communication professionals were also more motivated to create a healthy and

effective communication mechanism in order to achieve the organization's goal.

There was a high reliability ($\alpha = .86$) of the 12 items that measured the

involvement of the public relations function in strategic management, and a composite

index was created by summing the means of these 12 items. To test if there were any

significant differences among the four types of organizations in involving public relations

in strategic management, a one-way ANOVA F-test was conducted but no statistical

differences were found, $F(3, 71), = .72, p = .54$. This could have been due to the small

size in this study.

RQ 2: What kinds of reporting lines do public relations departments in China

have with members of the dominant coalition?

Around a third of the respondents (37%) reported that their head of public

relations, public affairs or communication was a member of the dominant coalition in

their organizations. Seventy-six percent indicated that their departments reported directly

to the most senior managers in their companies or their clients' companies. If not

reporting to the most senior managers, nearly Eighty-two percent reported to senior

managers who, in turn, reported to the dominant coalitions.

Practitioners perceived support from the power elite to some extent ($M = 3.68$, SD

$= 1.05$). A weak but significant correlation ($r = .23, p < .05$) was found between

perceived support and public relations' involvement in strategic management.

Specifically, three strategic practices of public relations were positively related to perceived support, including responding to major social issues ($r = .24, p < .05$), developing goals and objectives in organizational mission and policies ($r = .22, p < .05$), and identifying strategic publics ($r = .21, p < .05$). No correlation ($r = .14, p = .19$) was found between perceived support and routine public relations practice. These results suggest two possible meanings: It might be that public relations departments were more likely to receive support from the dominant coalition if they made a strategic contribution to the organizations. However, it could not be ruled out that receiving support from the dominant coalition was one key factor that led to strategic practice of public relations. [5]

    This finding concerning the value of public relations to the organization as Return On Investment (ROI) was not surprising. Estimations on Value of Public Relations were measured on a cost–benefit ratio scale from 0-200 percent, Practitioners' estimate of mean value was 122. 82 percent ($SD = 44.53$) (Table 4.2), indicating the benefits public relations generated were worth more than the cost of public relations activities. Practitioners' evaluation of their own estimated value was twelve percent higher than their estimates of what the dominant coalition's estimation on public relations would be ($M = 110.39, SD = 38.84$). This suggests that respondents did not think the dominant coalition valued the public relations function as highly as they did themselves. There was a weak but significant correlation between their prediction of how the perceived dominant coalition would value them and the involvement of this function to strategic management ($r = .30, p < .01$).

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    [5] And of course, some unassessed third variable could be present that simultaneously affect the support public relations receive and the involvement of public relations in strategic management.

Table 4.2 Practitioners' Estimation on Value of Public Relations, Practitioners' Perception of Dominant Coalitions' Estimation on Value of Public Relations, and Practitioners' Perception of Dominant Coalitions' Support for Public Relations

Indicator	*M*	*SD*
Practitioners' estimation on value of public relations	122.82	44.53
Practitioners' perception of dominant coalitions' estimation on value of public relations	110.39	38.84
Practitioners' perception of dominant coalitions' support for public relations	3.68	1.05

Note. Estimations on Value of Public Relations were measured on a cost–benefit ratio scale from 0-200%. Practitioners' Perception of Dominant Coalitions' Support for Public Relations was measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*agree*), to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Table 4.3 Knowledge for the Technician Roles and the Managerial Roles

Indicator	M	SD
Overall knowledge for the technician roles and the managerial roles (α=.91)	3.50	0.73
Knowledge for the technician roles (α=.84)	3.79	0.81
Produce communication materials (e.g.: press release, media advisory, fact sheet, brochure, speech, audio-visuals)	3.96	0.87
Coordinate a press conference	3.83	1.05
Convince a reporter to give publicity to an organization.	3.73	1.03
Understand the news values of journalists	3.65	0.98
Knowledge for the managerial roles (α=.88)	3.37	0.78
Conduct research to segment publics	3.22	1.07
Conduct evaluation research	3.38	1.03
Prepare a departmental budget	3.56	1.18
Develop strategies for solving public relations and communication problems	3.79	0.86
Help management to understand the opinions of particular publics	3.73	1.06
Help management to scan the environment and identify issues which may be potential threats or opportunities	3.60	1.08
Negotiate with an activist group	3.09	1.03
Write and publish research papers in PR or communication related journals	2.78	1.21
Establish ties or joint ventures with accredited PR organizations (e.g. China International Public Relations Association, Public Relations Society of China, International Association of Business Communications etc.)	3.24	1.28
Knowledge for the managerial roles (α=.88)	3.37	0.78

Note. N = 92. All items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*poor*), 2 (*fair*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*good*), to 5 (*excellent*).

From this data, it can be concluded that public relations departments are supported and valued by the dominant coalition to some extent. However, the direction of causality was not clear between the involvement of public relations to strategic management and the perceived value and support from the dominant coalition. According to the literature (Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002), this was a mutual and overlapping process. On the one hand, top-down support could bring public relations' strategic function into full play. On the other, the inside-out change carried out by public relations departments also stood a chance to convince organizational leaders to believe in the value of public relations and therefore gained more support.

There was unanimity among interviewees about the low status of public relations function in their organizations. Seven out of eight interviewees working for corporations reported the low status of public relations departments when compared with the marketing department. For example, one interviewee confirmed that "here and also in other organizations that I know of, the decisional power of public relations directors was limited compared to marketing directors", adding that "public relations department alone was likely to be excluded from the policy-making process, unless it was part of the marketing department."

As an example, of eight in-house public relations practitioners, two said that the PR Director reported to the Marketing Director rather than to the dominant coalition. Of the other six respondents (who confirmed a direct reporting line of the public relations departments to the dominant coalition), three stated that the head of public relations also assumed the role of Marketing Director in their organizations, which they reported to be common in China. They believed that it was the fact of being a Marketing Director that

enabled a closer relationship with the core decision makers. "Our Vice President, also the head of marketing and public relations, attends top management meetings", stated a junior in-house practitioner, "But the associate head of public relations, who is solely focused on public relations, and who reports to the head, is not eligible for the top meetings." Another interviewee, who was the head of the "Marketing and PR" department of a business-to-business corporation, attributed her close relationship with the CEO to the marketing function which the management values, rather than the public relations role. In her department, of seven people there was only one public relations specialist, the rest of the staff all being marketing specialists.

Through a closer analysis of the interviews, it can be concluded that even though a predominant number of survey participants claimed either a direct (76%) or indirect (one degree of separation) (82%) reporting line to the dominant coalition, this could largely be due to the public relations department's affiliation with marketing. In fact, ten out of thirteen in-house and agency practitioners admitted that there was an increasing tendency for marketing departments to either incorporate or entirely take over public relations functions.

The separation between corporate government relations (also called public affairs functions) and corporate public relations functions was another meaningful finding that accounted for PR's low status in organizations. In China, government relations is not in the spectrum of duties for PR departments. The function of government relations departments is usually deemed distinct from public relations, and given more attention by the dominant coalition because of the pervasive power of the government. This was confirmed by a senior in-house public affairs professional who had more than 15 years'

experience in this field. His job was to liaise with government officials and "settle problems that others (in the company) are incapable of."

He explained why public relations was not considered a member of the dominant coalition and not trusted to handle government relations in China: "They [PR practitioners] lacked the social capital to solve the organization's problems. They can't liaise with the government…the government here [in China] is considered to be one of the most important stakeholders [for organizations]."

Before elaborating on why public relations practitioners are not given this responsibility, it is important to understand the necessity of maintaining good "guanxi" with Chinese governments. The interviewee held that: "As long as we keep close and good relationships with the (Chinese Communist) Party, negative portrayal in the media will not greatly affect us." The Chinese media plays the role of the Party's mouthpiece and is required to serve as a tool of the party (Li, 2014). In many state-owned enterprises, senior management is on good terms with Party leaders and top officials in government thanks to the close personal ties they developed during different public and private occasions. Quality "guanxi" with governmental authorities is particularly important to maintain organizations' operation in underdeveloped areas. Gaining government support means acquiring rare resources and gaining legitimacy (Wu & Chen, 2011). Therefore, should any crisis occur, the leaders of a company could seek favors from government officials to prevent any negative media depictions of the crisis or the company.

In China, employees with abundant social capital – i.e., having good relationships with government officials – are frequently to be found in the top echelons of companies. Their relationships with government authorities were built on a personal, rather than

organizational, level and therefore are not transferrable to other people, including public relations professionals in the same organization. Additionally, the hierarchical culture in China leads to a highly stratified environment. To ensure the success of communication and negotiation at the organizational level, it is a prerequisite that people from the corporate side and the government side be equal in their organizational rank and status. Public relations practitioners, regardless of whether they are junior or senior, do not have adequate social capital, or social rank, to break the social norm and become close to the problem-solvers: authorities and key government officials. On most occasions, top-level dialogue usually occurs between the top leaders of corporations, such as the President or VP, and government officials.

The lack of communication between government relations and public relations departments in the same corporation was exemplified by another interviewee saying she did not know what "those people (in government relations department) do every day." In addition, compared with public relations, it was apparent that people who dealt with government relations were valued more than public relations practitioners as "their (government relations) director could directly impart information to the CEO." This interviewee added: "My director reports directly to CEO only because he is first and foremost a marketing head who also happens to manage public relations function."

One phenomenon deserves particular attention from public relations scholars. Even though scholars are unanimous that public relations should be positioned strategically in organizations, industry leaders tend to fixate on public relations' technical function and do not expect it to generate greater value other than writing media releases and implementing public relations campaigns. The stereotypical image of public relations

as low and technical focused was voiced in some interviews. For example, one interviewee revealed his contradictory attitudes towards public relations. This interviewee acknowledged the importance of public relations functions by stating, "the senior leaders are the real propellers of public relations," while arguing that the real propellers of public relations should not be entitled to the title of "public relations senior manager," "head of public relations," or any titles related with public relations. Employees with titles such as "chief strategist" and "public affairs professional," who are actually highly involved in public relations activities and strategies, would often prefer to not admit to working in PR. According to Zhang, Shen, and Jiang (2009), the different titles held by public relations staff members may not accurately reflect their PR-related duties. This is very different from professions such as lawyers, financial analysts or statisticians, whose job titles correspond precisely with job duties. Instead, public relations practitioners are often referred to by titles such as "communication professionals," "corporate communication managers," or "PR professionals," (p. 228). However, they all deal with different aspects of public relations duties.

RQ 3: What knowledge do public relations practitioners in China possess to facilitate practicing the managerial role and two-way communication?

Reliability for four items that measured the knowledge for the technician roles were .84, and .88 for nine items that measured the knowledge for the managerial roles. Composite indices were then created for technical knowledge and managerial knowledge. Respondents in this study had a higher knowledge for the technician role ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .82$) than for the managerial roles ($M = 3.37$, $SD = .78$) (Table 4.3). A Paired-Samples T Test showed there was a significant difference between these two indices ($t = -5.49$, p

< .001). In terms of the knowledge for the technician roles, practitioners were proficient in producing communication materials (M = 3.96, SD = .87) and coordinating a press conference (M = 3.83, SD = 1.05). In contrast, it seemed that practitioners did not write or publish research papers in public relations or communication-related journals as much (M = 2.78, SD = 1.21). The same finding was also presented in the Singapore study (Lim et al., 2005). The current finding suggests three implications: First, it implies a shortage of research ability and academic writing skills among practitioners, which was not surprising, given the fact that participants in this study all worked in industry. Moreover, collaboration between public relations scholars and practitioners might not be very close. Second, practitioners did not have time to write and publish articles in academic journals whilst full-time employees. Third, it is possible that participants did not have much interest or motivation in writing scholarly papers, considering that their professionalism was not evaluated by the quantity or the quality of publications. To better evaluate practitioners' interest in academic topics in public relations, future studies could also ask whether they read academic journals or blogs regularly.

Practitioners did not possess much knowledge in negotiating with activist groups (M = 3.09, SD = 1.03). This might be due to the low priority organizations placed on dealing with activist groups. In China, activists have not played a critical role in society, and the activist incidents in China were far fewer than in other democratic societies such as the United States (Kim & Sriramesh, 2009, p. 89; Wu, 2002). Not being exposed to activist groups, practitioners hardly faced any significant threats from them, and therefore could be less motivated to learn skills to deal with activists.

One-way ANOVA F-tests (Table 4.4) and Tukey post-hoc tests (Table 4.5) were

run to test differences across the four types of organizations regarding practitioners'

knowledge (including the overall knowledge, knowledge for managerial role and

technician roles). The results showed that practitioners working in different types of

organizations were significantly different in the overall knowledge in public relations

[$F(3,70) = 3.09$, $p < .05$, $\eta2 = .12$], and knowledge for practicing managerial roles

[$F(3,70) = 2.95$, $p < .05$, $\eta2 = .11$]. Furthermore, Tukey post-hoc tests were run and a

marginal difference was found between NGOs/NPOs and public relations agencies

regarding practitioners' overall knowledge in public relations and knowledge specifically

for managerial roles. The results showed that practitioners in agencies had more

knowledge in public relations in generalthan practitioners in NGOs/NPOs.

Table 4.4 One-way ANOVAs - Comparisons of Knowledge for the Managerial Roles, Knowledge for the Technician Roles, and Overall Knowledge across Four Types of Organizations

Variables		df	F	η2	p
Knowledge for the managerial roles	Between groups	3	2.947	.11	.039*
	Within groups	70			
	Total	73			
Knowledge for the technician roles	Between groups	3	2.337	.09	.081
	Within groups	70			
	Total	73			
Overall knowledge	Between groups	3	3.087	.12	.033*
	Within groups	70			
	Total	73			

Table 4.5 Tukey post-hoc test - Comparisons of Knowledge for the Managerial Roles, Knowledge for the Technician Roles, and Overall Knowledge across Four Types of Organizations

Dependent variable	(I) Organizational type	(J) Organizational type	Mean difference (I-J)	SE	p	95% CI Lower bound	95% CI Upper bound
Knowledge for the managerial roles	1.00	2.00	0.14021	.23343	.932	-0.4741	0.7546
		3.00	0.58069	.39580	.463	-0.4610	1.6224
		4.00	-0.50265	.23343	.147	-1.1170	0.1117
	2.00	1.00	-0.14021	.23343	.932	-0.7546	0.4741
		3.00	0.44048	.42884	.734	-0.6882	1.5691
		4.00	-0.64286	.28589	.120	-1.3953	0.1096
	3.00	1.00	-0.58069	.39580	.463	-1.6224	0.4610
		2.00	-0.44048	.42884	.734	-1.5691	0.6882
		4.00	-1.08333	.42884	.065	-2.2120	0.0453
	4.00	1.00	0.50265	.23343	.147	-0.1117	1.1170
		2.00	0.64286	.28589	.120	-0.1096	1.3953
		3.00	1.08333	.42884	.065	-0.0453	2.2120
Knowledge for the technician roles	1.00	2.00	0.00000	.24593	1.000	-0.6473	0.6473
		3.00	0.92857	.41700	.126	-0.1689	2.0261
		4.00	-0.26786	.24593	.697	-0.9151	0.3794
	2.00	1.00	0.00000	.24593	1.000	-0.6473	0.6473
		3.00	0.92857	.45181	.178	-0.2605	2.1177
		4.00	-0.26786	.30121	.810	-1.0606	0.5249
	3.00	1.00	-0.92857	.41700	.126	-2.0261	0.1689
		2.00	-0.92857	.45181	.178	-2.1177	0.2605
		4.00	-1.19643*	.45181	.048	-2.3855	-0.0073
	4.00	1.00	0.26786	.24593	.697	-0.3794	0.9151
		2.00	0.26786	.30121	.810	-0.5249	1.0606
		3.00	1.19643*	.45181	.048	0.0073	2.3855
Overall knowledge	1.00	2.00	0.09707	.21673	.970	-0.4733	0.6675
		3.00	0.68773	.36748	.250	-0.2794	1.6549
		4.00	-0.43040	.21673	.203	-1.0008	0.1400
	2.00	1.00	-0.09707	.21673	.970	-0.6675	0.4733
		3.00	0.59066	.39815	.453	-0.4572	1.6385
		4.00	-0.52747	.26544	.203	-1.2261	0.1711
	3.00	1.00	-0.68773	.36748	.250	-1.6549	0.2794
		2.00	-0.59066	.39815	.453	-1.6385	0.4572
		4.00	-1.11813*	.39815	.032	-2.1660	-0.0703
	4.00	1.00	0.43040	.21673	.203	-0.1400	1.0008
		2.00	0.52747	.26544	.203	-0.1711	1.2261
		3.00	1.11813*	.39815	.032	0.0703	2.1660

Note. 1= Corporations; 2= Governmental agencies; 3= NGOs/NPOs; 4= Public relations agencies.

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level *(2-tailed).*

As mentioned in the discussion of the first RQ, Chinese NGOs and NPOs lacked trained professionals in communication in order to practice this function. Government officials were often in charge of important policy-making for affiliated NGOs/NPOs, so the decisional power was not even in the hands of NGOs/NPOs' top management, let alone communication practitioners. In contrast, public relations agencies are hubs for the most capable professionals, who are generally well-trained in knowledge and practice. In addition, different types of organizations did not vary significantly in performing technician roles [$F(3,70)$ = 2.34, p = .08, $\eta2$ = .09].

Practitioners' overall knowledge was positively linked to public relations' involvement in strategic management (r = .56, p < .01) (Table 4.6). The correlation was significantly stronger (t = 2.91, p < .01) between managerial knowledge and strategic involvement (r = .58, p < .01) than between technician knowledge and strategic involvement (r = .37, p < .01). Specifically, the more managerial knowledge practitioners possessed, the more they were involved in organizational mission and policies making (r = .42, p < .01). The more technician knowledge practitioners had, the more they contributed in responding to major social issues (e.g., crises, layoffs, fee hikes, etc.) (r = .39, p < .01). Helping management identify strategic publics was the only strategic public relations function that significantly correlated with both managerial and technician knowledge. The correlation between "identifying strategic publics" and "knowledge for managerial roles" (r = .41, p < .05) was significantly different (t = -2.41, p < .05) from the correlation between "identifying strategic publics" and "knowledge for technician roles" (r = .34, p < .05).

Table 4.6 Correlations between Public Relations' Involvement to Strategic Management and Practitioners' Knowledge

Indicator	Overall knowledge	Knowledge for managerial roles	Knowledge for technician roles
Public relations' involvement to strategic management	.56**	.58**	.37**
We contribute to strategic planning.	.26*	.30**	.08
We contribute in responding to major social issues (e.g.: crises, layoffs, fee hikes etc.).	.35**	.32**	.39**
We contribute to major initiatives (e.g.: mergers, acquisitions, new movements in markets, launch of new products/services.	.31**	.31**	.20
We contribute in routine operations (e.g.: development and maintenance of employee communication, community relations or media relations program.	.18	.15	.21
We conduct formal research (e.g.: from news clippings, Internet) for use in decision-making.	.26*	.28*	.18
We conduct informal research (e.g.: informal interviews) for use in decision-making.	.28*	.29*	.16
We help our management to develop goals and objectives in organizational mission and policies.	.37**	.42**	.16
We help management to scan the environment and identify issues which may be potential threats or opportunities.	.34**	.35**	.30**
We help management to identify both internal and external strategic publics that affect the organization's mission and goals.	.41**	.41**	.34**
We have contacts with important publics (e.g.: analysts, economists, industry experts, government officials) outside the organization.	.23*	.22	.25*
The management seeks our opinion in decision making or planning.	.33**	.35**	.16
The management values our judgment in decision making or planning.	.33**	.35**	.18

Note. $N = 92$.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (*2-tailed*).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (*2-tailed*).

In addition, the level of knowledge for managerial roles was positively correlated with the dominant coalitions' estimated value of public relations ($r = .25, p < .05$). However, practitioners' technical knowledge did not significantly correlate with the dominant coalitions' estimated value of public relations, indicating technical skills were less important than managerial abilities when it came to the value (perceived by the dominant coalitions) that public relations can bring to organizations.

Table 4.7 Correlations between Public Relations Training and Public Relations Knowledge, Public Relations Training and Public Relations Value, and Public Relations Training and Support for Public Relations

Variable	Specialized training	Opportunities to advance education in public relations
Knowledge for the managerial roles	.48**	.49**
Knowledge for the technician roles	.47**	.20
Practitioners' perception of dominant coalitions' estimation on value of public relations	.22*	.29**
Practitioners' perception of dominant coalitions' support for public relations	.25*	.28**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (*2-tailed*).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (*2-tailed*).

These results also suggest that knowledge for managerial roles, though lacking, was more valued by management and more needed in organizational higher-level policy-making compared to knowledge for technician roles.

Respondents' educational level did not correlate with either their knowledge for managerial roles [$F(2,71) = 1.46, p = .24$] or for technician roles [$F(2,71) = 2.50, p = .09$)]. This was not surprising because most respondents did not have a degree in public

relations or communications. Only three out of twenty interviewees indicated that they received systematic education in school about public relations theories or practice. The majority of practitioners majored in English, journalism, or broadcasting. Because Chinese public relations education is only now coming of age, most of those who had a formal education in communication or public relations had just started their career, and those in management positions were mostly non-communication majors. One NGO interviewee said:

> My colleagues from other departments do not have any public relations experience but we still have them participate in public relations projects because we simply do not have enough manpower, which is basically true for 95% of NGOs in China.

Another local environmental NGO employee emphasized that "it is very rare for NGOs in China to have more than six employees, except for those government-supported NGOs."

With regard to professional training, organizations tended to provide practitioners with specialized training (e.g., training courses, seminars, workshops) ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .87$) rather than providing opportunities to advance their education in public relations ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.13$). This would seem to be sensible as helping employees obtain formal diplomas costs considerably more money and time than just hosting regular workshops.

There was a significant relationship between providing training and the knowledge required for managerial roles ($r = .48$, $p < .01$) and technician roles ($r = .47$, $p < .01$) (Table 4.7). Providing formal education only correlated with the managerial role (r

= .49, $p < .01$). It suggested that education in various forms was valuable in increasing

practitioners' knowledge, especially their skills, to practice the managerial role. In

addition, there was a positive relationship between perceived support and providing

practitioners with more formal education ($r = .28$, $p < .01$) and specialized training (r

= .25, $p < .05$). Perceived value of public relations also correlated with providing

education ($r = .29$, $p < .01$) and specialized training ($r = .22$, $p < .05$). The results implied

that organizations that valued and supported public relations were more inclined toward

advancing professionals' knowledge in public relations.

With regard to organization, public relations agencies tended to arrange more

training for staff than in-house public relations, NGO public relations, or government

public relations, although the differences were not significant. Agency practitioners were

not only educated about the theoretical differences between public relations, advertising,

and marketing, but also trained to be more skillful in technician operations, such as

writing news releases and handling media relations.

Interview data regarding professionals' knowledge revealed some interesting

findings. Because the discussion on this topic revolved around the challenges and coping

strategies, the qualitative findings will be elaborated in the last research question where a

list of challenges facing the industry was placed.

RQ 4:   Which public relations models do Chinese public relations practitioners

employ?

The internal consistency among the eight items that measured the press agentry

model was .78. A composite index was created by summing the mean of these eight items.

Public relations agencies used the press agentry model most frequently ($M = 3.85$, *SD*

= .34), but no significant difference was found among the four types of organizations

[*F(3, 71)* = 1.10, *p* = .36]. A predominant number (76.5%) of survey respondents

indicated that in their organizations, one purpose of public relations was to gain publicity

(*M* = 3.98, *SD* = .82) (Table 4.8).

A public relations manager's comment was representative of the other eleven

interviewees that commented on the popularity of the press agentry model:

"The PR department is the publicity department. Organizations depend on PR to change

what other people think and talk about the organization."

Another interviewee, a former journalist, criticized her public relations

counterparts for predominantly using the press agentry model. She thought in-house

public relations was too prone to boasting and exaggerating facts. She used "hypocritical

and sometimes misleading" to describe what public relations practitioners say and write

about the organizations they represented.

Half the survey respondents replied that disseminating neutral and accurate

information was one purpose of their public relations (*M* = 3.33, *SD* = 1.07). Public

information model was measured with three items (e.g., "One purpose of public relations

in my company is to disseminate neutral and accurate information, rather than serve as an

advocate for the organization or a mediator between management and publics)." Scores

on the three items were averaged to retain the 1-5 scale. The reliability of the public

information scale was .78. It was found that organizations were significantly different in

the way they practiced the public information model [*F(3,71)* = 3.51, *p* < .05, $\eta 2$ = .13].

Tukey post-hoc tests indicated that government sectors (*M* = 3.95, *SD* = .49) were

significantly more likely than corporations to use the public information model (*M* =

Table 4.8 Public Relations Models

Indicator	*M*	*SD*
Press agentry model		
One purpose of public relations in my company is to get publicity for my organization.	3.98	0.83
Our public relations unit disseminates only favorable information and avoids disclosing unfavorable information to the media.	3.63	1.12
We stage events, tours and open houses.	3.87	0.98
We hold banquets.	3.23	1.15
We offer gifts or memorabilia.	3.65	1.08
We determine how successful a program is from the number of people who attend an event or use our products/services.	3.61	0.89
We determine how successful a program is based on the number of media clippings generated.	3.50	0.95
It is the view of my organization that public relations should only act as a liaison between the organization and the media.	3.41	1.22
Public information model		
One purpose of public relations in my company is to disseminate neutral and accurate information, rather than serve as an advocate for the organization or a mediator between management and publics.	3.33	1.08
It is the view of my organization that the emphasis of public relations is placed on public service and social responsibility.	3.48	1.01
It is the view of my organization to make private economic gain and special interests subordinate to the public good.	3.32	1.06
Two-way asymmetrical model		
One purpose of public relations in my company is to persuade publics to behave as the organization wants them to behave.	3.59	0.92
Before starting a public relations program, we conduct attitude surveys or other informal research to ensure that an organization's policies will be implemented in ways its publics will most likely accept.	3.49	0.91
Two-way symmetrical model		
One purpose of public relations in my company is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organization and publics the organization affects.	3.67	0.95
One purpose of public relations in my company is to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes and behaviors of our publics.	3.64	0.93
Before starting a public relations program, we seek the opinions of those groups or individuals who will be affected by the decision or policy.	3.64	0.86
Before starting a public relations program, we conduct surveys or other informal research to find out how much management and publics understand each other.	3.58	0.92
It is the view of my organization that public relations should provide mediation for the organization – to help management and publics negotiate conflict.	3.67	0.92
We comply to an enforceable code of ethics and standards of performance including the disciplinary action of those who deviate from accepted behavior.	3.87	0.97

Note. N = 92. All items were measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*neutral*), 4 (*agree*), to 5 (*strongly agree*).

3.25, $SD = .76$) at .05 significance level. The two-way symmetrical model was also relatively common. About sixty-six percent of respondents believed that purpose of public relations was to develop mutual understanding between the management and public ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .95$). Sixty-eight percent respondents claimed that the purpose of public relations in their organizations was to change the attitudes of management as much as it was to change the attitudes and behavior of their public ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.17$). In addition, Sixty-one percent of the respondents believed the main purpose of public relations was to provide mediation and negotiate conflicts between management and the public ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .92$). Again, social desirability bias may be responsible for the high means and frequency of practicing two-way symmetrical communication. All eight interviewees working in corporations unanimously agreed that the primary purpose of corporate communications is to gain publicity for the corporations. When asked about the actual practice of symmetrical communications, they all claimed it to be an ideal situation which was difficult to achieve.

The two-way symmetrical model scale consisted of three items. An example item was "One purpose of public relations in my company is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organization and publics the organization affects." The reliability of the scale was .82. Significant differences were found between government agencies and corporations in their use of the two-way symmetrical model. Governmental agencies were more likely to practice two-way symmetrical communications than corporate public relations practitioners [$F(3,71) = 3.40$, $p < .05$, $\eta2 = .13$]. This result may look strange at first sight, as Chinese government agencies are believed to be authoritative. However, given the unpolitical nature of the participating institutes (i.e.,

Statistics, Agriculture and Environment Departments), they could be more committed to communicating with the public sincerely and openly. One of the limitations to this research was to interview government officials, especially those working in departments with stronger political orientations, such as publicity departments, represented by The Central Committee of the Communist Young League. Without strong personal connections with certain top leaders, it was impossible for this study to gain access to the full range of government agencies.

The two-way symmetrical model had a substantial relationship with public relations' involvement to strategic management ($r = .59, p < .01$). It is expected that through symmetrical communications with key stakeholders, practitioners could find common interest between publics and management, negotiate conflicts, and prevent crises from happening. By showing their strategic value as boundary spanners, public relations departments could contribute to organizations' decision-making. However, as there was no clear causal relationship indicated, it could also be argued that a public relations department managed strategically was more predisposed to conduct symmetrical communication. Pearson's r correlation indicated that the knowledge required for managerial roles correlated significantly with the two-way symmetrical model ($r = .50, p < .01$), as was the knowledge for technician roles ($r = .41, p < .01$). Since the premise of conducting two-way symmetrical communication entailed strategic mindset and implementation skills, it justified the importance of having both managerial and technical knowledge.

RQ5:   What challenges do Chinese public relations practitioners face in terms of practicing strategic public relations management and contributing to policy making?

4.1   Lacking public relations talent

The interviews revealed the industry's struggle to find qualified public relations talent. Managerial skills and industry know-how were said to be important but lacking among public relations practitioners in China. Even though organizations recruited experienced practitioners who held senior positions in public relations agencies, it was still worrisome because the mindset of agency practitioners was said to be "based on 'local' and concrete events rather than 'global' perspectives", and as an in-house practitioner working in a real estate company said: "I think agency practitioners may excel at planning events, contacting media, and pitching news stories to the press…[but] lacked experience in interdepartmental cooperation and insight into the industry in which they serve." This was repeated by a senior in-house practitioner from an environmental NGO who stated with frustration: "Our previous [public relations] partners knew little about how we run business." The NGO could not afford to waste money for poor advice and had decided to terminate the contract with the agency. This same interviewee added: "We think a deep understanding of NGO communication and an insightful interpretation of environmental policy is a prerequisite for public relations professionals to work with us [the environmental NGOs]."

Another example showed that only when public relations professionals had sufficient knowledge in an organization's core business and industry trends could they have greater influence within the organization. As mentioned earlier, the communication

leader of a non-profit hospital would conduct further analysis and write the report upon receiving the unprocessed data collected by a data company. As this communication leader put it:

> This procedure [writing report summary] could not be handed over to the data company because they did not have the healthcare expertise, which was the core business of the hospital… communication between our team and other departments' leaders was very smooth. I could directly talk with them about major communications issues.

> Five interviewees, including four corporate and one NGO practitioners, mentioned another factor that helps to explain the small talent pool in public relations. A large number of organizations, including multinational enterprises, are only interested in making profit in the shortest possible time, rather than building a strong and reliable reputation in the Chinese market. Under this macro-strategy, increasing sales and creating the maximum money in the shortest possible time can be the sole criterion for making major decisions. A senior director from an integrated communication agency stated:

> It is very hard for us to stick to ethical practices if organizations' behavior is extremely focused on profit. We [ethical public relations practitioners] should be concerned with a wider range of stakeholders than merely consumers, but [by doing that] we may get in the way of organizations' decision-making…By talking with some decision makers, I learned that they actually don't favor hiring public relations practitioners with strong ethical concerns because it could possibly hinder or even threaten their decision-making process. They want employees to serve and behave rather than challenge.

Another interviewee listed some qualities organizational leaders valued more in recruiting talents: "They [decision makers] are most satisfied with our efficiency and creativity [in implementing plans], not high ethical standards."

Practitioners have realized that ethics is no guarantee of input in organization's policy-making. One example that displayed the value conflict between the management and the public relations was hiring "Shui Jun". A common public relations practice, to combat the accusations (mostly valid) of an organization, is to hire "Shui Jun", a group of people who were paid a low wage by the public relations department to delete or discredit any negative comments, or manufacture positive feedback in order to cover up an organization's misbehavior. A software technology interviewee said: "Bad, bad, it's very bad. It only generates more opposition from the public [when organizations faced negative publicity] regardless of the intentions." The interviewee commented that the management tended to favor this method as "it saved money and maintained the organization's 'face' in the short term".

4.2   Facing clients who know little about public relations

Conflicts were evident between public relations practitioners and organizational leaders and also between public relations agency practitioners and their client organizations. A number of different agency practitioners reported that a lot of clients were disrespectful of their work and even attacked them verbally. Four out of five agency practitioners in the interview complained that only a handful of their clients really understood public relations practice. A senior managing director from one of the biggest local public relations agencies stated that they frequently had to "first educate clients about public relations, given the fact that most of the clients were overly obsessed with

news releases and media exposure." One senior account executive from an international public relations firm was disappointed at clients who treated her job as merely producing more news and increasing the organization's exposure, while she hoped they would "listen to the agency's professional advice." When asked about their experience working with clients, a few interviewees reported difficult encounters with clients, including a number of globally renowned companies. They used words such as "ignorant and unbearably arrogant" to refer to the worst clients they had worked with.

An interviewee, who had just left her job as a senior public relations manager to work in an international integrated marketing firm, gave an example to show the difficulty of dealing with less-educated clients:

Previously, it was a common practice for us to assign a U.S. public relations team to assist Chinese clients who desired to open up the U.S. market. However, conflicts took place between some clients and our U.S. subsidiary when the subsidiary failed to reach the desired result; specifically, to publish feature articles in key media outlets such as the Washington Post. They [the Chinese clients] did not understand how media operates in the U.S. or understand that the value of PR does not rest on the number of news articles it helps to produce. Unlike in China, public relations could not "buy" media in the U.S. to publicize their clients. Chinese clients were usually number-oriented and revenue-oriented and did not understand that western media are more independent. News coverage cannot be traded off for money or guanxi.

The story ended embarrassingly with the client unwilling to pay the U.S. public relations team because the service did not meet their requirements. Given this situation,

the firm would only assign Chinese public relations teams to help Chinese brands to enter global markets now despite the fact that firm's U.S. subsidiaries may have been more experienced in assisting clients with communications in the U.S.

4.3 Insufficient use of scientific research

The survey showed the practitioners engaged in some formative ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .89$) and more evaluative research ($M = 4.04$, $SD = .94$). However, according to several interviewees, the interviews revealed that conducting deep and thorough research was neither necessary, nor central to practitioners. By and large, practitioners did not engage in large-scale research of any kind. Rather, they preferred to collect public opinions on the Internet through social media, such as WeChat, Weibo, Facebook, and industry BBS.[6]

In the past, practitioners would seek insights from a variety of key stakeholders, such as media editors, key opinion leaders, and target customers before designing a set of messages and strategies. But this method appears to be lesser used nowadays.[7]

A senior manager from an international public relations agency provided two reasons to explain the rise of online secondary research:

Our specialty has been associated with implementing campaigns rather than in researching. In comparison, clients preferred to partner with advertising and big-data research companies to conduct research. For our partners [in-house public relations], they were shy of conducting comprehensive research because of

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[6] WeChat and Weibo are Chinese social network platforms, similar to Facebook and Twitter in the U.S.

[7] Practitioners indicated that they collected opinions over the phone or via face-to-face with stakeholders. Surveys were rarely used as they were less effective than verbal communication.

inadequate knowledge in how to carry out research, as well as a shortage of workforce and budget.

Five interviewees pointed out that there were more important things than training professionals to become researchers. Practitioners' "common sense" and "professional instinct" was believed to be necessary for good communication strategies to be effectively implemented. For example, one interviewee stated that: "if the budget was too tight to carry out thorough research, most practitioners would simply follow their "instinct." The CEO of a local public relations agency supported this statement and believed "practitioners should accumulate knowledge on a daily basis so that they could form 'professional instincts' over time, which could be more valuable than research ability".

Three practitioners used words such as "fudged", "biased", and "meaningless" when describing public relations research. One senior practitioner noted that " research would be meaningless if the main purpose was to search for evidence to back up organizations' predetermined agenda", which, unfortunately, "was not a rare situation". Another interviewee reinforced the notion: "I hate to admit it but a lot of research was 'fudged' because they were deliberately honed to support the predetermined conclusion."

4.4   Public relations as a low priority for organizations

For Chinese corporations, long-term reputation does not seem to be a priority compared to making profit in the short term. As was briefly mentioned above, a large percentage of the interviewees felt that management was so keen to sell products that it was hard for public relations practitioners, despite their high qualifications, to sway management's perspectives on what public relations truly means.

This phenomenon holds true for Chinese local enterprises, in particular those younger ones, who prioritize gaining market share in a highly competitive environment. For them, building a reputation for future development was not the priority. This mindset is similar to some countries' attitude towards environmental pollution, especially in developing countries that are experiencing a rapid economic boom. Little attention is paid by the government to reducing pollution because everything else is considered secondary compared to economic growth. Similar to this situation, public relations, which aims to defuse conflicts and build relationships between organizations and their key stakeholders, is often set aside because it rarely has an immediate and measurable impact on an organization's profit-making goal.

Another reason for underutilizing public relations was illustrated by a senior secretary who worked closely with a CEO:

> It usually took longer for the board of directors to make a decision, which was incompatible with the rapidly changing economic and policy environment in China. Decisions made by one person [the CEO] are more efficient…Many [Chinese] organizations are culturally authoritarian. Owners of local enterprises are reluctant to relinquish power, making it difficult for them to designate control to board members and employees… It is hard to persuade management of the potential benefits of public relations.

4.5   Coping with digital media and integrated communication

The majority of interviewees asserted that digital media is in conflict with the function of public relations. People who were pessimistic about the future of public relations had witnessed organizations' increasing investment in digital marketing and

digital media whilst simultaneously reducing investment in public relations. Of all the interviews, only the CEO of a local public relations agency held a different opinion:

> Too many people said, "Oh PR is going to die soon" or "Digital media has beat us." Believe it or not, I don't think the essence of PR has changed. It's about being transparent and honest to the public as always, isn't it? I don't think it has changed.

In addition to concerns over new media, the interviews revealed that practitioners were also worried that the organizations' implementation of integrated marketing communication (IMC) had presented new challenges to them. A professor of public relations at a university said that the trend of IMC is "unstoppable", and "Public relations practitioners really doubt their value now."

A few public relations practitioners have argued that public relations function should be the brain behind IMC strategy. As a communication director for a non-profit organization stated:

> Public relations departments share the closet tie with an organization's stakeholders, so we need to be in charge of the organizations' communication strategies and brand building, a function that cannot be replaced by advertising or marketing communications.

CHAPTER 5. IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND
SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

5.1   Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent public relations was

strategically managed in China. To achieve this goal, four research questions addressing

different aspects of strategic public relations practice were proposed. The fifth research

question was dedicated to discovering the challenges facing public relations practitioners

in the realm of strategic public relations management.

The evidence suggests that strategic public relations management is scarcely

conducted in China. The findings pertaining to the first research question revealed that

public relations was mostly evident in the technician role – taking orders from top

management – rather than being involved in organizational policy making. Organizations'

top managers did not show much interest in elevating public relations' status since it is

hard to quantify the value that it creates.

With respect to the second research question, it was found that public relations

staff members are not members of the dominant coalition nor did public relations have a

convenient reporting line to senior management. In addition, public relations was not

valued sufficiently by senior managers to enable it to join the top decision making body –

the dominant coalition. Public relations' low status in organizations was conspicuous

compared to marketing and public affairs. Not only is it not given enough attention in guanxi (relationship) maintenance, but it also suffers professional stigmatization.

Regarding professional knowledge, the results suggest that public relations practitioners in China have a lot to learn in terms of how to practice managerial roles. The lack of managerial skillsets could account for why practitioners do not attain either managerial roles or practice two-way communication. Managerial knowledge and industry know-how is positively related to public relations' involvement in organizations' policy-making, indicating that well-rounded knowledge is key to adding public relations' value to organizations. Therefore, it is recommended that Chinese public relations practitioners should strengthen their managerial knowledge in order to better practice two-way symmetrical communication.

The fourth research question aimed to discover which public relations models are predominantly practiced by organizations in China. All of the four public relations models were used, with the press agentry model used most prominently. This finding is consonant with literature that suggests press agentry's popularity around the world. Practitioners might be biased in answering the purpose of communications perceived and practiced by their organizations in reality. Instead, they may have answered what would be the ideal purpose of communication for their organizations. Therefore, though practitioners asserted in the survey that the purpose of public relations was to develop mutual understanding between organizations and the publics, the in-depth interviews actually indicated that two-way symmetrical mentality is rarely found in for-profit organizations. In addition, the more knowledge held by public relations practitioners for the managerial and technician roles, the more likely they would practice the two-way

symmetrical model. The use of this model could further increase public relations' chance to be involved to strategic management.

The fifth question revealed some major challenges facing Chinese public relations of the day. Public relations in China should tackle challenges vis-a-vis lack of talent, agency-client conflicts, lack of formal research, pressure from organizations' decision-making dynamic, and use of digital media.

This study has enriched the area of global public relations and strategic management scholarship. The study is the first to explore the current state of strategic public relations management in China by operationalizing the generic principles in the Chinese public relations industry. This study found that public relations does not usually contribute to organizational policy making in China. The analysis also delves into the contextual factors that impact public relations practice in China, such as the emphasis on profit, government power and media control.

This study has deeper implications for practice; it has pinpointed the major challenges standing in the way of enhancing public relations as a strategic management function. The findings corroborate the critical role practitioners' knowledge (both managerial knowledge and technician knowledge) plays in strategic public relations management. The increasing number of students majoring in public relations, it was hoped, would instill more professionalism to this industry and bring bottom-up renovation. It is vital for public relations education to not only teach students practice but also theories, so that they can have a clear understanding of the different facets of public relations and ways in which it can contribute to organizational effectiveness. Currently, the public relations industry in China is comprised of practitioners with no public

relations or communication-related education. By providing practitioners with professional training and formal education in public relations or communication, organizations expect to see an increase in practitioners' managerial ability and practical skills.

This study also recommends that practitioners should be firm in challenging unethical decision makers, a quality that has rarely been discussed by public relations scholars. To force organizations to face up to challenges and make changes, public relations should give warning to top management by allowing negative, yet accurate, comments to go unchecked, rather than deleting or blocking them at the order of management. Through negative comments about the organizations, the management and the business unit would hopefully be forced to make essential reforms regarding their behavior.

It is understandable that public relations professionals might be reluctant to speak out against management's orders. In a culture with such high power distance, if not operated properly, they would at best face score lower in their Key Performance Index (KPI). At worst, they could lose their jobs.

Despite these dilemmas faced by practitioners, this study suggests that public relations employees need to have the courage to teach, persuade, or even argue with less PR-educated leaders, explaining the rationale and referencing cases to them, helping them to develop holistic and long-term goals, and not being afraid of criticism or suspicion. It is worthwhile for future studies to look at the various paths – such as practitioners' knowledge, initiative, and courage – that public relations professionals

could take to prove its value to top management and their respective contribution to organizational policy making.

Instead of planning for the right and correcting the wrong, it is not uncommon to use biased data as a source to implement activities. The unethical use of research deserves more scholarly attention in the future. Organizations that purposefully conducted biased research should never be considered to practice two-way symmetrical communication, as they were dishonest to the public.

This study also found that some public relations practitioners treat digital media as a threat and tend to separate themselves from it. Public relations scholars such as Grunig have claimed that digitalization has brought opportunity for public relations to reach its full potential as a strategic management function. If public relations is conceived as a strategic management function, the use of online media could enhance equal communications between organizations and the public. An internet-mediated environment in which organizations and their publics are embedded can contribute considerably to organizations' shift from using a one-way publicity model to two-way communications. In the era of traditional media, powerful organizations such as centralized governments and corporations paid little attention to the public's requests because they largely controlled information content and channels. Messages only flowed from the organization to the public, but not the other way around. However, the Internet has empowered the public to an unprecedented degree so that now views, positive or negative, can be posted about organizations. Social media such as Twitter and Facebook have proved to be powerful tools in enhancing two-way communications between organizations and the public as they have made information-gathering and dissemination

more convenient for both sides. By listening carefully, organizations can respond to the public's needs through interactive and dialogical communication on social media.

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

Despite these interesting findings, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size of the survey respondents was relatively small. Although the researcher tried different incentives to recruit participants, the response rate could have been larger. This study tested some differences among four types of organizations. But the sample size from governmental agencies and NGOs/NPOs was still too small to lead to more significant comparisons among different types of organizations. However, the 20 in-depth interviews with public relations practitioners has filled the gap to a considerable extent.

Second, some of the survey indicators need to be updated. The survey questionnaire used in this study was adapted from Lim et al.'s (2005) study. During the interviews, some practitioners reflected that the questionnaire was "stale" and did not have a lot of "interesting questions". There were not questions related to attitudes towards digital media, cooperation with other departments, or the trend of integrated communications. It was acknowledged that the questionnaire should be updated. The questionnaire was almost the same question set from 10 years ago, which did not address new issues which have emerged in this field in the past 10 years. However, the interviews offset it by applying updated concepts in digital media and integrated communications. Another shortcoming was that this questionnaire was based on a western definition of strategic public relations, and could not cover many unique aspects of Chinese public relations. In addition, new indicators for the four public relations models, especially for

the two-way asymmetrical model, could be added. In the current survey, there were only two items measuring this model.

This study focused on exploring whether strategic public relations was practiced in China and the challenges it is facing. Even though this study touched on suggestions to some issues, it is recommended that future studies concentrate on finding solutions to tackle the challenges facing practitioners today. Scholars interested in this topic can dedicate themselves to exploring each subsection of this study, such as talent shortage, the lack of public relations research, or the application of a public relations model. In-depth interviews and focus group study would be appropriate to generate rich discussions among public relations practitioners.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Questionnaire—English Version

We would like to know your opinion on the way public relations is practised in your organisation. It will take you about 10-15 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Participation is strictly on a voluntary basis, and all information provided will be kept anonymous. Thank you for your co-operation.

For some questions, please tick the appropriate box. For other questions, please rate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate number. Please provide **ONE** answer for each question unless otherwise specified.

The following series of questions asks about your relationship, as head/consultant of a public relations or communications department, to senior management.

1. Many organizations today are controlled by a group of powerful people – often called the "dominant coalition". In your organization, who is represented in this power-elite? (Please tick ALL that apply)

   ❑ The chief executive officer
   ❑ The chief financial officer
   ❑ The chief operating officer
   ❑ The head of public relations, public affairs or communication
   ❑ The chief information officer
   ❑ The chief marketing officer
   ❑ Others, please indicate_____

2. Now, please indicate the extent you believe the "dominant coalition" or power elite you have just identified supports the public relations or communication function in this organization.

   No support at all   **Strong support**

   1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

3. Does your public relations department report <u>directly</u> to the most senior manager/dominant coalition in your company?

   ❑ Yes (if yes, proceed to Q5 now)
   ❑ No (if no, proceed to Q4 first)

4. If there is no direct reporting relationship to the senior manager, does the department then report to a senior manager who in turn reports to the dominant coalition?

    ❑ Yes
    ❑ No

    The next set of questions asks about the different functions and activities that your public relations departments <u>could be</u> involved in. Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5, the extent you agree with each item that describes what your public relations department does.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

5. This question measures the extent your department contributes to <u>strategic management</u> of your organization.

    a) We contribute to strategic planning.   1   2   3   4   5

    b) We contribute in responding to major social   1   2   3   4   5
        issues (e.g.: crisis, layoffs, fee hikes etc).

    c) We contribute to major initiatives (e.g.: mergers,   1   2   3   4   5
        acquisitions, new movements in markets, launch
        of new products/services).

    d) We contribute in routine operations (e.g.:   1   2   3   4   5
        development and maintenance of employee
        communication, community relations or media
        relations programs).

6. This question measures the extent your department contributes to <u>strategic planning and decision making</u> through each of the following activities.

    a) We conduct formal research (e.g.: from news   1   2   3   4   5
        clippings, Internet) for use in decision making.

    b) We conduct informal research (e.g.: informal   1   2   3   4   5
        interviews) for use in decision making.

    c) We help our management to develop goals and   1   2   3   4   5
        objectives in organizational mission and policies.

d)	We help management to scan the environment and identify issues which may be potential threats or opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
e)	We help management to identify both internal and external strategic publics that affect the organization's mission and goals.	1	2	3	4	5
f)	We have contacts with important publics (e.g.: analysts, economists, industry experts, government officials) outside the organization.	1	2	3	4	5
g)	The management seeks our opinion in decision making or planning.	1	2	3	4	5
h)	The management values our judgment in decision making or planning.	1	2	3	4	5

7. Now, estimate the value your public relations or communications department has to this organization in terms of a cost-benefit ratio. A percentage less than 100% would indicate that you think your department provides benefits worth less than the amount budgeted. 100% would indicate that the benefits equal the costs. A percentage greater than 100% would indicate that the benefits are worth more than the amount budgeted.

   a) Your estimate

On a scale from 0-200%

   b) Now, indicate what members of the dominant coalition would estimate the value of your public relations or communications department to the organization.

On a scale from 0-200%

8. Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 the extent you believe the statement describes the way public relations is practiced in your organization. **YOUR RESPONSE SHOULD SHOW HOW PUBLIC RELATIONS IS ACTUALLY PRACTISED, NOT THE WAY YOU THINK PUBLIC RELATIONS SHOULD BE PRACTISED**.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

a)   One purpose of public relations in my company is to get publicity for my organization.

1   2   3   4   5

b)   One purpose of public relations in my company is to disseminate neutral and accurate information, rather than serve as an advocate for the organization or a mediator between management and publics.

1   2   3   4   5

c)   One purpose of public relations in my company is to persuade publics to behave as the organization wants them to behave.

1   2   3   4   5

d)   One purpose of public relations in my company is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organization and publics the organization affects.

1   2   3   4   5

e)   One purpose of public relations in my company is to change the attitudes of management as much as it is to change the attitudes and behaviors of our publics.

1   2   3   4   5

f)   Our public relations unit disseminates only favorable information and avoid disclosing unfavorable information to the media.

1   2   3   4   5

g)   Before starting a public relations program, we conduct research.

1   2   3   4   5

h)   Before starting a public relations program, we conduct attitude surveys or other informal research to ensure that an organization's policies will be implemented in ways its publics will most likely accept.

1   2   3   4   5

i)   Before starting a public relations program, we conduct surveys or other informal research to find out how much management and publics understand each other.

1   2   3   4   5

j)   Before starting a public relations program, we seek the opinions of those groups or individuals who will be affected by the decision or policy.

1   2   3   4   5

k) During a public relations program, we use face-to-face communication with the organization's publics.   1   2   3   4   5

l) We stage events, tours and open houses.   1   2   3   4   5

m) We hold banquets.   1   2   3   4   5

n) We offer gifts or memorabilia.   1   2   3   4   5

o) After conducting a public relations program, we perform evaluation of the program.   1   2   3   4   5

p) We determine how successful a program is from the number of people who attend an event or use our products/services.   1   2   3   4   5

q) We determine how successful a program is based on the number of media clippings generated.   1   2   3   4   5

r) It is the view of my organization that public relations should only act as a liaison between the organization and the media.   1   2   3   4   5

s) It is the view of my organization that public relations should provide mediation for the organization – to help management and publics negotiate conflict.   1   2   3   4   5

t) It is the view of my organization that the emphasis of public relations is placed on public service and social responsibility.   1   2   3   4   5

u) It is the view of my organization to make private economic gain and special interests subordinate to the public good.   1   2   3   4   5

v) We comply to an enforceable code of ethics and standards of performance including the disciplinary action of those who deviate from accepted behavior.   1   2   3   4   5

w) We provide opportunities for practitioners to advance their education in public relations (e.g.: graduate or post-graduate programs).   1   2   3   4   5

x) We provide specialized training (e.g.: training courses, seminars, workshops) for practitioners to advance their knowledge in public relations.   1   2   3   4   5

9. The next series of items list tasks requiring special knowledge or expertise that is available in some public relations or communications departments but not in others. How would you rate the expertise or knowledge of communications practitioners in your department to perform each task listed?

Poor	**Fair**	**Neutral**	**Good**	**Excellent**
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

a) Produce communication materials (e.g.: press release, media advisory, fact sheet, brochure, speech, audio-visuals)   1   2   3   4   5

b) Coordinate a press conference   1   2   3   4   5

c) Conduct research to segment publics   1   2   3   4   5

d) Conduct evaluation research   1   2   3   4   5

e) Prepare a departmental budget   1   2   3   4   5

f) Convince a reporter to give publicity to an organization.   1   2   3   4   5

g) Understand the news values of journalists   1   2   3   4   5

h) Develop strategies for solving public relations and communication problems   1   2   3   4   5

i) Help management to understand the opinions of particular publics   1   2   3   4   5

j) Help management to scan the environment and identify issues which may be potential threats or opportunities   1   2   3   4   5

k) Negotiate with an activist group   1   2   3   4   5

l) Write and publish research papers in PR or communication related journals   1   2   3   4   5

m) Establish ties or joint ventures with accredited PR   1   2   3   4   5
organizations (e.g. China International Public
Relations Association, Public Relations Society
of China, International Association of Business
Communications etc.)

PERSONAL PARTICULARS OF RESPONDENT

10. Please indicate your gender.
   - ❑ Male
   - ❑ Female

11. Please indicate your age.
   - ❑ 18 – 20 years old
   - ❑ 21 – 25 years old
   - ❑ 26 – 30 years old
   - ❑ 31 – 35 years old
   - ❑ 36 – 40 years old
   - ❑ 41 – 45 years old
   - ❑ 46 and above

12. What is your highest level of education attained?
   - ❑ No formal education
   - ❑ Primary level
   - ❑ Secondary level
   - ❑ College level
   - ❑ Graduate level
   - ❑ Post-graduate level (Masters, PhD)
   - ❑ Other

13. Please indicate your basic income per month (before taxes).
   - ❑ Less than ¥5000
   - ❑ ¥5000 – ¥10000
   - ❑ ¥10001 – ¥15000
   - ❑ ¥15001 – ¥20000
   - ❑ More than ¥20 000

14. Please indicate your nationality.
   - ❑ Chinese citizen (if you're a Chinese citizen, proceed to Q16)
   - ❑ Foreigner (please specify: _____) (if you're a
     foreigner, proceed to Q15)

15. Please indicate the type of industry your organization is in.
    - ❏ Public relations/Consulting agency
    - ❏ Government/public administration
    - ❏ NGO/NPO
    - ❏ Banking and finance
    - ❏ Building and construction
    - ❏ Healthcare
    - ❏ Information technology
    - ❏ Manufacturing
    - ❏ Property
    - ❏ Service (please specify _____)
    - ❏ Others (please specify _____)

16. Please indicate the geographical orientation of the organization you are working in.
    - ❏ Local organization
    - ❏ Multinational/International organization

17. Is your organization a member of a strong professional body (e.g. China International Public Relations Association, Public Relations Society of China, International Association of Business Communications etc.)?
    - ❏ Yes (If yes, please indicate _____)
    - ❏ No

18. Please indicate the staff strength of your public relations or communications (corporate communication, employee relations etc) department.
    - ❏ 1 – 5
    - ❏ 6 – 10
    - ❏ 11 – 20
    - ❏ 21 or more

19. Please indicate your designation in the organization:

    _____

20. How many years have you been practicing public relations?
    - ❏ Less than 1 year
    - ❏ 1 – 2 years
    - ❏ 3 – 5 years
    - ❏ 6 – 10 years
    - ❏ More than 10 years

- THE END –

Appendix B. Questionnaire—Chinese Version

问卷

您被邀请参与来自美国普渡大学 Brian Lamb 传播学院，由岳岑开展的问卷调查。这份问卷调查旨在研究中国各类组织对公关关系的战略管理现状。问卷会紧密围绕以下四个问题：公共关系在组织战略 决策过程中地位；公共关系部门是否属于组织决策团体的一员（或者能够直接向最高管理层汇报），公共关系模型以及公关从业者的知识储备。

考虑到您作为公关／传播人员的从业经历，您被邀请参与本次问卷调查。本着自愿参与的原则，此问卷将占用您大概 10-15 分钟的时间。

您的个人信息会被严格保密。研究结果将会提交到学术期刊，专业博客，并且会在学术会议上进行陈述。

若您希望了解更多信息，请联系研究员岳岑 （邮箱: yue13@purdue.edu; 电话: 01-425-614-5012）。

在参与本研究的过程中，如对所享有的权利存有疑问，请拨打人类研究保护项目（the Human Research Protection Program）的电话（765）494-5942，或发邮件到 irb@purdue.edu，或寄信至：Human Research Protection Program - Purdue University, Ernest C. Young Hall, Room 1032, 155 S. Grant St., West Lafayette, IN 47907-2114

以下问题将了解您作为公共关系部门或者传播交流部门主管／顾问与决策层之间的关系。

1. 许多组织由拥有管理权力的人运作，通常被称为"决策团体"。您所属组织里，谁属于这一类决策群体？（请选择**所有**符合要求的选项）

   ❑ 首席执行官
   ❑ 首席财政官
   ❑ 首席运营官
   ❑ 公共关系、公共事务或者传播交流部门主管
   ❑ 首席信息官 CIO
   ❑ 首席市场官（营销官）CMO
   ❑ 其他，请具体说明

2. 刚刚您已经指出了您所在组织中的决策群体，，那么这些人在何种程度上支持组织的公共关系或者传播职能？（1 代表最弱，5 代表最强）

        1   2   3   4   5

3. 您所属公共关系部门**直接**向最高管理层或者决策群体汇报吗？

    ❑ 是（如果是，请跳到第 5 题）
    ❑ 否（如果否，请继续第 4 题）

4. 如果公共关系部门不能直接向最高管理层汇报，那么您所属部门会汇报给高级经理，并由他／她转而汇报给决策群体吗？

    ❑ 是
    ❑ 否

以下问题旨在了解您所属公共关系部门可能会行使的不同职能和参与的活动。请在量表上选择合适的数字，表明您对以下表述认同的程度。

强烈反对   **反对**   **中立**   **认同**   **强烈认同**

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

5. 本题旨在了解您所属公共关系部门对整个组织在<u>战略管理层面</u>的贡献。

    a) 我们帮助组织进行战略规划。   1   2   3   4   5

    b) 我们帮助组织应对重大的社会问题（例如：危机，裁员，涨价等）。   1   2   3   4   5

    c) 我们帮助组织采取重大举措（例如：组织合并，收购，市场新举动，发布新产品／服务）。   1   2   3   4   5

    d) 我们帮助组织进行日常工作的运营（例如：促进并维系员工之间的交流，维系社区关系或者媒体关系）。   1   2   3   4   5

6. 本题旨在了解您所属部门通过以下活动为组织的<u>战略规划和决策</u>作出的贡献。

    a) 我们开展正式调研（例如：通过新闻剪报　　1　2　3　4　5
　　和互联网搜索）来帮助组织进行决策。

    b) 我们开展非正式调研（例如：非正式采访）　1　2　3　4　5
　　来帮助组织进行决策。

    c) 我们帮助管理层制定组织的使命和　　　　　1　2　3　4　5
　　政策目标。

    d) 我们帮助管理层监测外部环境，并发现　　　1　2　3　4　5
　　潜在的挑战或者机遇。

    e) 我们帮助管理层识别会影响组织目标和　　　1　2　3　4　5
　　使命的内外部的关键公众。

    f) 我们与组织之外的重要公众保持联系　　　　1　2　3　4　5
　　（例如: 分析人士，经济学家，行业专家，
　　政府官员　）。

    g) 管理层在决策规划或制定过程中会主动　　　1　2　3　4　5
　　询问我们的意见和观点。

    h) 管理层在决策规划或制定过程中　　　　　　1　2　3　4　5
　　重视我们的判断。

7. 请试着从成本效益比率的角度评估您所属的公共关系／传播部门对组织的贡献。低于 100%表明该部门的效益低于投放的成本。100%表明效益和成本相当。高于 100%表明效益高于投放的成本。

    a) 您的评估

                    0%200%

b) 请试着判断决策群体的领导们会对您所属的公共关系／传播部门对组织的
贡献做出怎样的评估。

0% 200%

8. 请在量表上选择合适的数字，表明您对以下关于公共关系在您所属组织里发挥
职能的表述的认同程度。请注意：您的回答应该反应公共关系在您的组织里实
际发挥的作用，而不是在理想情况下公共关系应该发挥的职能。

强烈反对	反对	中立	认同	强烈认同
1	2	3	4	5

a) 我所属组织里，公关的目的之一是为组织　　1　2　3　4　5
进行宣传。

b) 我所属组织里，公关的目的之一是传递中立　1　2　3　4　5
且准确的信息，并非作为组织的宣传者
或者是管理层和公众的调解者。

c) 我所属组织里，公关的目的之一是说服公　　1　2　3　4　5
众做组织之所想。

d) 我所属组织里，公关的目的之一是促进管　　1　2　3　4　5
理层和公众之间的相互理解。

e) 我所属组织里，公关不仅旨在改变公众的　　1　2　3　4　5
态度和行为，同样也改变管理层的态度。

f) 我们的公关部门只对媒体透露有利消息，　　1　2　3　4　5
避免走漏不利消息。

g) 在开展公关项目之前，我们会先进行　　　　1　2　3　4　5
调研活动。

h) 在开展公关项目之前，我们会进行态度　　　1　2　3　4　5

调查或其他非正式调研，以保证组织的
政策能以公众最能够接受的方式实施。

i ） 在开展公关项目之前， 我们会进行调查   1 2 3 4 5
      或其他非正式调研，以了解管理层和公
      众之间相互了解程度。

j ） 在开展公关项目之前，我们会征求受众   1 2 3 4 5
      （受决策影响的个人或者群体）的意见。

k ） 在开展公关项目过程中，我们会采用   1 2 3 4 5
      面对面的方式和公众进行交流。

l ） 我们会举办一些赛事，游览活动和   1 2 3 4 5
      开放日活动。

m） 我们会举办宴会。   1 2 3 4 5

n ） 我们会提供礼品或纪念品。   1 2 3 4 5

o ） 公关项目结束后我们会进行项目评估。   1 2 3 4 5

p ） 我们通过衡量参加活动的人数或者产品／ 1 2 3 4 5
      服务使用的人数来评价一个项目成功与否。

q ） 我们通过衡量媒体简报的数量来   1 2 3 4 5
      评价一个项目成功与否。

r ） 我所属组织认为公关**仅应该**处理好   1 2 3 4 5
      媒体关系。

s ） 我所属组织认为公关应该起到调解人   1 2 3 4 5
      的作用，协调管理层和公众之间的矛盾。

t) 我所属组织认为公关的重心在于公共服务 　1　2　3　4　5
和社会责任。

u) 我所属组织认为公共利益高于组织的经济 　1　2　3　4　5
收益和特殊利益。

v) 我们遵守强制性道德规范和行为准则， 　1　2　3　4　5
对违反道德规范者会给予纪律处分。

w) 我们为从业人员提供公关方面的高等 　1　2　3　4　5
教育机会（例如：本科或者研究生项目）。

x) 我们为从业人员提供特殊培训（例如： 　1　2　3　4　5
培训班，研讨会，工作坊），以提高
他们的公关知识。

9. 以下几项罗列出了一些需要公关部门或者传播部门所具备的专门知识和技能来
完成的任务。您怎样评估您所在部门完成下列任务的水平？

　　　　　差　　　　　　一般　　　　良好　　　　　好
非常好

　　　　　　　1　　　　　　2　　　　　3　　　　　4
5

a) 制作宣传材料（如：新闻稿，媒体公告 　1　2　3　4　5
，简报，宣传手册，演讲稿，多媒体材料）

b) 协调新闻发布会 　1　2　3　4　5

c) 实施受众划分调研 　1　2　3　4　5

d) 实施评估研究 　1　2　3　4　5

e) 起草部门预算 　1　2　3　4　5

f) 说服记者为组织进行宣传   1   2   3   4   5

g) 理解记者的新闻价值   1   2   3   4   5

h) 为解决公关和传播难题出谋划策   1   2   3   4   5

i) 帮助管理层了解某些公众的观点   1   2   3   4   5

j) 帮助管理层进行监测外部环境，
并发现潜在的挑战或者机遇   1   2   3   4   5

k) 与激进组织进行协商   1   2   3   4   5

l) 在与公关或者传播学相关的学术
期刊上发表作品   1   2   3   4   5

m) 与官方认可的公关团体建立合作关系
（例如：中国国际公关协会，中国公共
关系协会，国际商务沟通协会等）   1   2   3   4   5

受访者个人资料

10. 您的性别是
   - ❑ 男
   - ❑ 女

11. 您的年龄在
   - ❑ 18-20 岁之间
   - ❑ 21-25 岁之间
   - ❑ 26-30 岁之间
   - ❑ 31-35 岁之间
   - ❑ 36-40 岁之间
   - ❑ 41-45 岁之间
   - ❑ 46 岁以上

12. 您的最高学历是
   - ❑ 无正式教育
   - ❑ 小学

- ❑ 中学
- ❑ 专科
- ❑ 大学（本科学位）
- ❑ 研究生(包括硕士研究生和博士研究生)
- ❑ 其他

13. 您税前的月收入在
- ❑ 5000 元以下
- ❑ 5000-10000 元之间
- ❑ 10001-15000 元之间
- ❑ 15001-20000 之间
- ❑ 20001-25000 元之间
- ❑ 25001-30000 元之间
- ❑ 30000 元以上

14. 您的国籍是
- ❑ 中国公民
- ❑ 外国人（请表明您的国籍_____）

15. 请表明您所在组织所属的产业类型
- ❑ 公关／咨询公司
- ❑ 政府／行政管理业
- ❑ NGO/ NPO
- ❑ 银行金融业
- ❑ 建筑业
- ❑ 政府／行政管理业
- ❑ 健康行业
- ❑ 信息技术产业
- ❑ 制造业
- ❑ 房地产业
- ❑ 服务业（请具体说明_____）
- ❑ 其他（请具体说明_____）

16. 您所在组织的地域取向是
- ❑ 当地组织
- ❑ 跨国／国际组织

17. 您所在组织是某个专业团体的会员吗（例如：中国国际公关协会，中国公共关系协会，国际商务沟通协会等）？
   - ❑ 是（如果是，请说明＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿）
   - ❑ 否

18. 请指出您所属公关／传播（包括企业传播，员工关系）部门的员工人数。
   - ❑ 1 – 5 人
   - ❑ 6 – 10 人
   - ❑ 11 – 20 人
   - ❑ 21 人以上

19. 请指出您在所属组织中的头衔: ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

20. 您在公关领域从业多少年？
   - ❑ 不到 1 年
   - ❑ 1-2 年
   - ❑ 3-5 年
   - ❑ 6-10 年
   - ❑ 10 年以上

－结束－

Appendix C. Interview Protocol—English Version

Letter of Consent

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Cen Yue from the Brian Lamb School of Communication at Purdue University, Indiana, United States. This study explores the extent to which strategic public relations are practiced in organizations located in China. In particular, I am interested in four questions: whether public relations is regarded as a strategic management function, included in the dominant coalition (or have a direct reporting relationship to the management), the models of public relations, and knowledge of public relations practitioners.

Given your experience and work as a communication practitioner, you have been selected as a possible participant in this study. If you agree to take part in the study, the investigator will ask you questions about your perception of and attitudes toward strategic public relations practice in China. The interview will take approximately 30-40 minutes. For the memory purposes, the interview will be audio recorded under your permission.

Your personal information will be kept confidential. The findings from this study will be presented in writing in academic journals and other outlets, such as professional blogs. In addition, the findings of this study will be presented at academic and professional conferences.

For more information about this study, please contact investigator Cen Yue (email: yue13@purdue.edu; phone: 01-425-614-5012).

Your signature below indicates that you have read and that you understand the information written in this letter of consent, and that you agree to take part in this study.

_____

(Printed name)

_____

(Signature)

_____

(Date)

1. Please share with us a brief historical background of your PR/communications department.
   a. When was it set up? What is the staff strength of your PR department?
   b. What is the nature of your business?
   c. Who are your clients/stakeholders/the publics your organizations' activities will affect?
   d. Are you represented by any PR agency for your communications program or do you outsource projects to any agency? If so, please share which agency you work with (local or MNC).
2. What do you think if the chief purpose of public relations, i.e., what role can PR play?
3. Briefly describe how your organization would usually conduct a PR program or campaign. Also, describe what kind of public relations activities you conduct for your organization.
4. How, if at all, are public relations practitioners involved in strategic planning here?
5. If you do perform extensive research prior and/or after a campaign, please state which kinds of research tools (e.g., survey, focus groups, interviews) you use. If you don't conduct research, perhaps explain which are the constraints (e.g., time, budget, etc.) you face.
6. How many years of experience do you have in PR? Do you have formal education in PR?
7. What forms of training does your organization provide to the PR staff? Are there opportunities for PR practitioners to advance further into post graduate PR course/degrees?
8. Do you consider yourself as part of the senior management/dominant coalition? Whom do you report to? How much support do you receive from the top management?
9. How, in particular, could a public relations practitioner become a member of the dominant coalition, the group of powerful people making policy for the organization?
10. How does senior management rate the value of PR work?
11. What do you think are some of the challenges facing PR practitioners in China on an organizational and industry level? (e.g., image of the profession/industry, common misconceptions about what PR is, lack of support from top management in PR, etc.)
12. Are there any cultural, economic, or political factors that affect the way PR is practiced in China?
13. What are some of the particular characteristics of the local PR industry that you would like to highlight? If you have practiced PR in other markets, please feel free to make industry comparisons.
14. What is the current image and status of PR professionals in China?

Appendix D. Interview Protocol—Chinese Version

采访说明

您被邀请参与来自美国普渡大学 Brian Lamb 传播学院由岳岑开展的采访。这份调查旨在研究中国各类组织对公关关系的战略管理现状。采访会紧密围绕以下四个问题：公共关系在组织战略决策过程中地位，公共关系部门是否属于组织决策团体的一员（或者能够直接向最高管理层汇报），公共关系模型以及公关从业者的知识储备。

考虑到您作为公关／传播人员丰富的从业经历，您被邀请参与本次采访。如果您同意参与本次采访，研究人员将会就以上问题与您进行交流。采访会占用您 30-40 分钟时间。考虑到翻译和校对工作，我们希望本次采访可以录音。如您不希望被录音，我们会尊重您的选择。

您的个人信息会被严格保密。研究结果将会提交到学术期刊，专业博客，并且会在学术会议上进行陈述。

若您希望了解更多信息，请联系研究员岳岑 （邮箱:yue13@purdue.edu; 电话:01-425-614-5012）。

您的签名代表您已经阅读并理解以上说明，并且同意参与本次采访。

_____
(印刷体姓名)

_____
(签名)

_____
(日期)

1. 能先简单介绍一下你们 PR/传播部门的历史吗？
    a. 比如说，它是什么时候建立的？
    b. 从事公关传播的员工有几人？
    c. 你们机构有外包服务到乙方公关公司吗？如果有，你们授权的乙方是谁（是本地公关公司还是国际公关公司）？
    d. 贵机构都有哪些利益相关者(stakeholders)呢？都有哪些公众会受到贵机构政策影响，或者是会影响到贵公司决策过程的？
2. 请简要描述一下贵机构通常情况下是如何开展公关活动的。你所参与的公关活动都有哪些？
3. 你认为公关的主要作用是什么？例如：公关在组织里到底能扮演什么角色？
4. 你觉得你们公关部门有没有参与到组织重大政策的决策过程当中？如果有，你们是以何种方式参与到战略规划过程中的？
    1. 重大政策和决议可能包括：帮助组织进行战略规划；帮助组织应对重大的社会问题（例如：危机，裁员，涨价等）；帮助组织采取重大举措（例如：组织合并，收购，市场新举动，发布新产品／服务）
5. 你们在开展公关活动前后会进行广泛的研究调查吗？能不能介绍一下你们都使用什么调查手段，或者是调查工具？比如说：网络舆情分析，问卷调查，采访，焦点小组（小组座谈会）。如果你们不进行调查，又是什么因素阻止你们进行调研活动的呢？是时间，预算吗，还有其他原因吗？
6. 你觉得自己是高层管理／组织当权者的一员吗？你向谁汇报？你从最高管理层那里得到多少支持？你部门的最高领导（如：公关总监）向谁直接汇报？
7. 你觉得公关从业者怎样才能成为组织当权者的一员？组织当权者是指为组织制定政策，拥有决策话语权的团体。
8. 你觉得高级管理层是如何看待 PR 带来的价值的？你又是如何看待 PR 带来的价值的？
9. 您从事 PR 有多少年了？您接受过正规的 PR 教育吗？
10. 贵机构都给公关人提供何种培训？公关人有没有机会进修到公关的研究生课程或者是拿到公关的研究生学位？
11. 公关理论对公关的模型有四种分类：publicity model（宣传式公关），public information model (公共信息传播模型)，two-way asymmetrical model (双向不对称)，目的是说服公众做组织之所想；以及 two-way symmetrical (双向对称)。理想的公关应该是双向对称的。也就是说组织的目的，背后的动机是真正想与公众进行意见上的沟通和交换。并非是一味对产品和服务的宣传，或者是关于信息单纯的传递（常见于政府公关）。双向对称公关的最终目的是促进管理层和公众之间的相互理解，协调管理层和公众之间的矛盾。

12.　　　　分别从组织层面和行业层面来谈，你觉得中国公关人面临的挑战是什么？（例如：职业／行业形象问题，对公关的常见误解，缺乏领导层的支持）（中国公关目前是否面对概念和定位模糊化的问题，比如常常与网络媒体，自媒体的混淆，来自数字媒体对自身存在的威胁）。

13.　　　　有什么文化，经济或者政治层面的因素在影响中国公关行业的发展吗？

　　　　a. 本地公关行业有什么特性没有？如果你在其他市场也从事过公关工作，你是否可以做一下不同市场之间的行业对比？

　　　　b. 你怎么评价目前中国公关从业者的形象和地位？