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## The Perfect Balance: Combining Global and Local Strategies for Effective International Public Relations

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**The Perfect Balance:  
Combining Global and Local Strategies for Effective  
International Public Relations**

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at  
Syracuse University

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Candidate for B.S. Degree  
and Renée Crown University Honors  
May 2013

Honors Capstone Project in Public Relations

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Stephen Kuusisto, Director

Date: May 7, 2013

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## Abstract

This paper discusses the benefits of using a combination of global and local public relations tactics to optimize global marketing activities and reach target publics. It also compares various cultures and public relations practices around the world, and offers examples of international public relations campaigns that have successfully reached their target markets by incorporating global strategies with cultural twists that are specifically tailored to local communities.

In today's progressively more globalized world, where people are connecting more quickly than ever before, it is vital that organizations know how to communicate correctly. While many theorists prefer either global strategies or local strategies, this paper argues that organizations should be combining global and local public relations strategies to communicate with their worldwide publics.

My methodology for obtaining this information consisted of interviews and extensive research of books, articles, blogs, interviews and case studies. I conducted over 40 literature reviews, comparing and contrasting various public relations theories. I also spoke with public relations professionals around the world to gain insight into their day-to-day experiences with global campaigns.

My Capstone findings demonstrate that global campaigns with localized tactics that cater to specific target groups are the most effective way to reach a broad market and attract a loyal base of consumers. Public relations practitioners must understand the markets in which their clients want to do business as well as how their target audiences receive information. Effective public relations can boost sales and build trust among an organization's stakeholders.

## **Acknowledgements**

Writing this Capstone has been an adventure, which has increased my appreciation for international public relations, and the research, creativity and planning that go into a successful campaign. It took hard work and tremendous determination, but I did it!!

I would like to acknowledge my family, mentors and friends, who supported me throughout this journey. Mom and Dad, thank you for instilling within me a love for life and learning. None of this would have been possible without you. To Sheila Gunn, my international public relations professor in London, you inspired me to look around and notice what makes people unique. The world is a more beautiful and fascinating place since I took your class. To Professor Kinsey, my incredible mentor and Capstone advisor, thank you for always welcoming me into your office and encouraging me to follow my vision. Your guidance helped me develop a paper of which I am truly proud. I am forever grateful to all of you, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Ever since globalization became the international business paradigm, international public relations and the ability to communicate with publics around the world have become key to successful marketing. This paper discusses the benefits of using a combination of global and local public relations tactics to optimize global marketing activities and best reach target publics. It also offers examples of international public relations campaigns that have successfully reached their target markets by incorporating global strategies with cultural twists that are specifically tailored to local communities.

Public relations is most often defined as the management function that seeks to establish and maintain mutually beneficial

relationships between an organization and its “publics.” It gained major popularity in response to the consumer movement of the 1960s that aimed to protect buyers from “unsafe products, unsanitary working conditions, unfair pricing and other breaches, real and alleged” (Bates, 2006, p. 16). Companies and the government, as well as universities, which were “hotbeds of social action,” realized that they had to pay attention to their “publics” to retain support and be successful. Public relations practitioners were hired to address these and other “hot topics,” including corporate expansion, pollution, global warming, and market control. Public relations and marketing communications remain a vital part of business and consumer sales worldwide.

Interestingly, while the public relations industry is relatively new, public relations itself is possibly the oldest field in existence today, since it was used by the ancient governments of Persia, Babylonia and Egypt to promote, persuade and inform their nations. Despite its ancient roots, however, public relations grew tremendously since the creation of the first public relations agency, Hill and Knowlton, in 1927 (Rudgard, 2003). Current statistics reveal that the public relations industry in the U.S. is three times the size of the non-U.S. worldwide public relations

industry, with U.S. organizations spending more than \$10 billion annually on public relations (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2007).

Descriptions of public relations tactics around the world are extremely limited. While much information is available from public relations professionals in the United States and a few Western European countries, there is little empirical evidence about public relations practices from other regions. This has become even more of a problem since the few editors who publish scholarly articles about the industry do not want manuscripts that are “merely descriptive,” the most common types in countries that have less established public relations industries. Furthermore, the information that does qualify from other countries is usually not in English and, consequently, does not receive broad circulation.

Despite this lack of empirical evidence, it is obvious that the outreach of organizations to other countries and markets has grown enormously in recent years, making the idea of domestic public relations nonexistent (Sriramesh and Vercic, 2003). The bottom line is that multicultural perspectives are key to a successful international public relations campaign.

## Chapter 2

### Global vs. Local

In 1952, Edward Bernays, whom many consider the father of public relations, wrote, “The three main elements of public relations are practically as old as society: informing people, persuading people, or integrating people with people.” Nevertheless, as society has changed, the “means and methods” of public relations have changed (Bernays, 1923, p. 12).

According to Phillip Kotler, there are two primary public relations strategies—global and local. Global marketing strategies employ a homogenization and integration of activities around the world, and were first made possible with democratization and the expansion of communication technologies such as satellite television and the Internet in the late 1900’s. Communication

technologies in other parts of the world made people aware of the products and services available, while political freedom made it possible for them to consume the products of their choice.

American economist Theodore Levitt suggested in a 1983 Harvard Business Review article called “The Globalization of Markets” that global corporations such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi and McDonald’s replace strategies of customization and personalization with strategies that “operated as if the entire world (or major regions of it) were a single entity; such an organization sells the same things in the same way everywhere” (Levitt, 1983, p. 147). These globally standardized products would be advanced, functional, reliable and low priced. Customers would prefer suitable world-standardized products with low costs and high quality and reliability, he said.

Years later, however, Levitt proposed the application of intricately detailed local strategies to the operative and tactical levels of a campaign (Kotler, 2009). Ball said that since customers were losing their connections with brands, companies would have to employ greater flexibility, responsiveness and sensitivity to target the niches and communities that made up their target audiences. According to “International Business: The Challenge of

Global Competition,” this realization pushed companies to “go local” (Ball, 2003).

Zambuni (1983), Shimp and Sharma (1987) support this change, because they agree that consumers prefer brands with strong local connections. They support the theory of consumer ethnocentrism (CET), which states that many individuals view their groups as superior to others and favor homegrown products.

It is not easy for a local company or brand to compete in today’s global market, but Ger writes that it is achievable with effective positioning and targeting that creates “a sustainable unique value and...the symbolism of authenticity and prestige” (Ger 1999, p. 70). By positioning itself as a brand that has a deep understanding of local culture, tastes and needs, and targeting groups that have strong cultural ties, a local brand can create this “unique value” and achieve the competitive edge. It is about presenting “local-as-an-alternative” to global and establishing the local company as the community’s iconic brand.

Coca-Cola was one multinational marketer that chose to go local. According to Coca-Cola’s former chair Douglas Daft: “The world had changed, and we had not. The world was demanding greater flexibility, responsiveness and local sensitivity, while we

were further consolidating decision making and standardizing our practices. The next big evolutionary step of 'going global' now has to be 'going local'" (Ball, 2003).

Despite this shift in opinion, Steenkamp, Batra and Alden promote the view that global brands hold a special appeal to consumers. In fact, in "How Perceived Brand Globalness Creates Brand Value," they present consumer data from the U.S. and Korea that show that perceived brand globalness (PBG) is directly correlated with perceived brand quality and purchase likelihood (2003). As a result, corporations position brands as 'global' by using the same logos, brand names and visuals (Alden, 1999).

The perception that a brand is global can be created in a few ways. Either consumers can learn a brand's name from media coverage, word of mouth or their own travels, or a brand can use marketing tactics to imply that it is available worldwide even though it might not be. However perceived brand globalness spreads, a brand's appeal usually stems from higher perceived quality, higher prestige and psychological benefits. Note that these perceptions are not necessarily true. According to Bearden and Etzel, a global brand could just seem to be of higher quality because it is more expensive and scarce than the local brands

(1982). A global brand could also be associated with more high profile events such as the Olympics and the World Soccer Cup, which make it seem more sophisticated, cosmopolitan and modern (Thompson and Tambayah, 1999).

The benefits of globalization are a popular topic of discussion for media experts. Neff says that globalization saves time because it does not require customized alterations (Neff, 1999). Yip provides a more economic reason and writes, “globalization can yield economies of scale and scope in R&D, manufacturing, and marketing” (Yip, 1995). According to Hassan and Katsanis, the benefit is that brands become more appealing as market segments around the world—especially teenagers and businesspeople—develop similar needs and tastes (Hassan and Katsanis, 1994).

When the novelty of brand globalness wears off, however, localized appeal reemerges as a major factor of consumption. In 2000, Belk reported that consumers in Zimbabwe measured the elite status of the global brands they could afford by the symbols of the developed world that they adopted. Since they have a strong local culture, they also respected symbols of their past and local culture.



So today, most companies combine the two methods—working globally by selling standard products and services while customizing messages to local publics—to effectively reach a broad base of consumers. Globalization theorist Roland Robertson used the term “glocalization” to describe these “tempering effects of local conditions on global pressures.” It stems from the Japanese word *dochakuka* and means “the simultaneity – the co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies” (Khondker, 2004).

A combined “glocal” marketing strategy has three main advantages. First, brands attain a greater market share. Second, the strategic, tactical and operative levels of marketing are balanced. Finally, consumers feel that the brand is relevant and specifically tailored to their needs (Kotler, 2009). Many international companies promote local professionals to executive positions in their local regions to ensure that they apply their knowledge and information of the culture to product and brand development. In contrast, U.S. corporations like Philip Morris and Coca-Cola have acquired local brands to diversify their brand portfolio. Coca-Cola, for example, owns more than 100 local

beverage brands across the globe. Two-thirds of Coca-Cola's Japanese sales stem from local beverage brands (Quelch, 2003).

According to Cortney Rhoads Stapleton, EVP and Professional Services Practice Leader at Bliss Integrated, international corporate communication strategies are best when they are country or city specific with precisely targeted messages. From a practical standpoint, country specific campaigns are more interesting to reporters, because news outlets want stories that appeal directly to their readers rather than diluted regional messages. It is, therefore, vital that organizations understand the cultures in which they want to do business and how their target audiences receive information.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Culture and Public Relations**

According to the Excellence Project by Vercic, Grunig and Grunig, well-implemented public relations practices cater to five environmental variables: political ideology, economic system, degree of activism, and culture and media system (1996). While there are few studies proving the connection between most of these factors and public relations, one connection that has been empirically proven to impact public relations is culture.

There are two types of culture that affect the way public relations is implemented: societal culture and corporate culture. Societal culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits

acquired by man as a member of society” (Tyler, 1871). Like societal culture, corporate culture includes all of the elements that make up a specific environment—but it’s the work environment. Krishnamurthy Sriramesh and Dejan Vercic define corporate culture as “the rules of the game for getting along in an organization and the hopes that members of an organization share.” In a perfect public relations scenario, organizations will espouse cultures that match the cultures of the people they are trying to target through their campaigns. Hence, one of the most important tasks of a public relations agency is to research a specific “public” to help a client tailor messages to a specific community because target communities can be extremely different from one another.

For example, Western societies such as the United States focus on the individual (Connard, 1996). Asian societies, on the other hand, emphasize collectivism. In fact, there is not even a word for personality in the Mandarin language, because there is no distinction between the person and the society. The prevalence of collectivist thought is highlighted even in the way people are addressed on a daily basis. Rather than calling someone by his or her first name, Chinese people address each

other with their family names preceding their given names (Hofstede, 2001, 210).

This collectivist attitude presents challenges for public relations practitioners because it requires them to spend a tremendous amount of time to develop trusting relationships before they can conduct business. Westerners focused on efficiency are likely to be frustrated by this. Following their traditions of nepotism and favoritism, Chinese people base important decisions on friends and relatives as opposed to universal standards of evaluation, which are important to Westerners (Parsons, 1951). Most difficult to overcome for a global brand is China's ethnocentric attitude to non-natives, because it makes Chinese people hostile towards Western suppliers, customers, investors, tourists and joint-venture partners (Brady, 2000).

Another incongruence between Asian and Western cultures is the Asian fear of being shamed. Because virtue is stressed by Confucian teachings, Chinese people will sometimes conceal problems to save face (Hofstede, 2001, 354). This is the opposite of transparency, which is one of the values American public relations professionals hold most dear. Therefore, to cater

to the Chinese clientele and live up to American ethical standards, public relations professionals in China must plan their campaigns in ways that will ensure that the native will not suffer from a loss of face. Including praise with the suggestions and criticisms can be an effective way of working with Chinese people (Goffman, 1971, 95-187).

Like China, Arabic and Islamic societies focus on interrelated networks as opposed to individual people. On the Arabian Peninsula, society tends to be defined by religious affiliation and circles of kinship. Religion affects everything in the region by instituting a set of values and order within the community (Lewis, 1994, 37). Things are either haram (forbidden) or halal (permitted) in the Muslim culture, and attempting to change these core values is an attack on the Muslim faith. As a result, public relations campaigns in this region need to carefully respect the people's religious boundaries.

While UAE culture used to be very similar to that of other Muslim countries, modernization is slowly distancing it from other countries on the Arabian Peninsula. Better education has made a huge difference. It has also helped women transition from the sole roles of just wives and mothers into the dual roles of home

managers and workplace leaders (Jalilvand, 2000). Also, whereas oral communication used to be the preferred method of transferring information, literacy and technology have brought mass media to the country. Now UAE media have excellent countrywide penetration and can transfer their messages to a vast audience (Badran, Turk and Walters, 2003).

Despite the fact that the UAE is modernizing and changing, Muslim society across the Arabian Peninsula is, for the most part, extremely homogenous. The majority of residents are Muslim, have similar community and family structures, and follow the same values.

At the other end of the spectrum—and the world—is the extremely diverse Brazilian society. Comprised of five major ethnic groups, Brazil is a country with people of different colors, religions and personalities. Public relations practitioners should celebrate this diversity through their campaigns. There are full-blooded natives that live mainly in the upper Amazon basin and northern and western border regions, Portuguese who intermarried with natives and slaves, descendants of Africans brought as slaves, and people with Middle Eastern, Asian and European backgrounds who immigrated to Brazil between 1875

and 1960. Thousands of Germans, Italians, Spaniards, Poles and even Japanese have settled in Brazil. In fact, Sao Paulo accommodates the largest Japanese community outside of Japan. This heterogeneous society is known as the “Brazilian rainbow” (Molleda, Athaydes and Hirsch, 2003).

Yet, among these diverse people lies a strong national identity, in part, because they speak Portuguese—not Spanish like the rest of South America’s inhabitants. According to Gannon, Brazilians are extremely friendly and positive people (2001). Hofstede’s cultural dimensions explain that this is because they are constantly faced with political and economic difficulties, and offset their anxiety about this instability with a passion for life (1983). Interpersonal relationships and environmental preservation are more important to them than earning a lot of money (Gannon, 2001).

As a result, a media relations function built upon personal contacts and relatable human communications is a public relations must in Brazil. Companies that want to develop strong Brazilian fan bases need to have strong relationships with journalists, editors and government officials, and sponsor events that attract lively Brazilian personalities. According to Molleda,



Athaydes and Hirsch, Brazilian and transnational corporations hold special events that emphasize nationalism and the “Brazilian rainbow” even if they have only immediate, short-term effects. Overall, the media relations and event planning aspects of the public relations industry are quite strong in Brazil. In “Effects of Public Relations Roles and Models on Quality Committed Brazilian Organizations,” Penteadó summarizes the common arrangements of the Brazilian public relations industry:

“Public relations departments are usually divided between the ‘journalists,’ who are the press agents, and the mediators...that deal with external environments; and the “public relations,” practitioners who take care of the internal environment...most events, and...most of the research” (1996, p. 124).

Throughout the world, media placements are often the most obvious way of gaining exposure among target groups. However, public relations practitioners need to understand the extent of media outreach and figure out how to ensure that their audiences have access to their messages. Reporters and media gatekeepers might not always have the power to reach the desired groups in every country. For example, media can access

only a small segment of the total population of developing countries because the majority of its people are often illiterate and poor. If the target publics cannot read, print media will have no impact. Similarly, if they cannot afford to buy technology such as televisions, computers and radios, they will have no access to the organization's messages. Infrastructure that cannot support electronics can hinder media access, even among the wealthier community members.

Folk media, also known as oramedia, are especially popular in Africa's less developed countries, such as Ghana, which do not have access to mainstream media. Although these unconventional methods can only reach a few people at a time, they are extremely powerful because their features strongly reflect traditional culture and they speak "to common people in their own language, in their own idiom, and dealing with problems of direct relevance to the situation"(Jenkins and Ugboajah, 1986, 33). Therefore, although folk media are not an especially prominent part of public relations in the West, companies and brands in Rural Africa that aim to raise awareness about primary health care, adult literacy, fighting AIDS and

efficient farming should use folk media to transmit public relations messages and change behaviors.

Puppet shows, village gossip, oratory, poetry, music, praise singing, weddings, funerals and political rallies are types of folk media, which can also be considered forms of grassroots expression (Hubley, 1993). The Theatre for Communication Implementation and Development, a local theatrical group, uses simulated live shows to educate crowds about breast-feeding and family planning. CARE International uses puppetry and storytelling to encourage people in the Wassa West and Adansi West regions to work on improving spousal communication and social harmony (Panford, Nyaney, Amoah and Aidoo, 2001).

Fortunately, access to mass media is not an issue in South Africa, because all South Africans, whether they are rich or poor, have access to mass media. Activist groups have direct access to media and push the coverage of crime levels, AIDS, rape and farm murders (Mersham and Skinner, 1999). While people in urban areas have access to print media, and to electronic media where there is electricity, radio broadcasts extend to the rural areas of South Africa. These mass media reach many people, but public relations professionals must remember that they only have a

cognitive influence on news consumers, meaning that they primarily impact people's knowledge, awareness and interest, unlike the more influential folk media. Furthermore, in Africa, like in the United States, media organizations are the gatekeepers and their ideologies influence their stories (Rensburg, 2003).

## Chapter 4

### “Glocal”ized Campaigns

Once research of the target publics has been collected, and findings are relayed to the CEOs, the agency’s account executive works together with the internal department’s management staff to implement a campaign that will hopefully improve public opinion within the target market on a specific issue. The account executive also meets with the organization’s Dominant Coalition to discuss plans and analyze the progress of its campaigns (Cutlip, 2000).

A successfully glocalized campaign fits a brand culture smoothly into a community’s culture. According to Thomas Friedman, it is the nature of “a culture, when it encounters other

strong cultures, to absorb influences that naturally fit into and can enrich the culture, and to compartmentalize those things that, while different, can nevertheless be enjoyed and celebrated as different” (Friedman, 2000). As a result, an international public relations campaign must achieve a balance between penetrating a society with foreign influences and not overwhelming it.

Brands use glocal tactics, designing everything, including products, prices and distribution methods, to attract specific cultures and publics. For example, a number of food and beverage brands cater their products to cultural tastes. Fanta, a Coca-Cola brand, makes country-specific flavors available. Whereas Fanta Shokata, made from the traditional elderflower, is available in Romania, green apple Fanta is available solely in China, and watermelon Fanta is available only in Portugal and Spain (Battle of Brands, 2013). Similarly, PepsiCo snack choices vary by country. Top choices include the Lemon Lays in Thailand, Sea-food Lays in China, Paprika Lays in Germany and cheese-onions in the United Kingdom. Danone<sup>1</sup> actually changed its yogurt products solely for the Chinese market. Since the Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> This is Danone. Not Dannon.

are lactose intolerant, Danone made its product base less lactose-based (Danone Institute).

McDonald's also caters its offerings to local tastes.

Therefore, although the chain is famous for its meat and burger dishes, the McDonald's restaurants in each country have their own distinct tastes. For instance, in Uruguay there is a poached hamburger called "McHuero," and in Thailand there is a Samurai Pork Burger, while the popular dish in Japan and Malaysia is Teriyaki Burger served with rice. Additionally, the menu in Germany offers beer; in France, wine; in Australia, mutton pies; in Philippines, McSpaghetti; in Canada, McLobster; and in Norway, McDonald's sells a grilled salmon dish called "McLaks."

Branding differences also stem from geographic and religious traits. For instance, Nokia phones in India have unique anti-dust keypads because the tremendous amount of dust in India tends to damage phones. The Volkswagen brand has a huge market in the Muslim community because it acknowledges their religion by simply installing compasses that point towards Mecca (AFP, 2007).

A fascinating case study of Facebook shows that cultural differences even affect the digital environment. When Facebook

first broke into the e-market, its creators had a 'one-size-fits-all' strategy, encouraging users to have as many friends as possible. However, the developers quickly altered Facebook to fit the realities of cultural difference. In Japan, a person with more than 50 friends is considered superficial. Since the American Facebook did not cater to this culture, it lost its lead market position in Japan to its competition, "Mixi." "Mixi" is a social network that does not tell others how many friends someone has, does not have a 'like' button and does not have public walls. Meanwhile, Facebook has set up a Japan team to face cultural challenges, redesign its market strategy and build a loyal fan base.

Coca-Cola decided to use digital media to reach its young people in each country effectively, so it blended its social media centered youth strategy with local twists. The brand uses social media to target young people because it has found that in all of those countries, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter provided this age group with the greatest amount of information.

Coke's relationship with young people began in 2009, when it implemented a special social media campaign called Expedition 206. The company's own "brand love research" had



shown that there was a direct correlation between audience engagement and sales. Furthermore, according to Coca-Cola Group Director of Worldwide Interactive Marketing Michael Donnelly, “social media is where Coke’s customers were at the moment...so there was no better way to amplify Coke’s message” (PRSA).

On Oct. 21, 2009, Coca-Cola—working with Fast Horse, an integrated marketing agency—unveiled Expedition 206. This expedition was a social media program that sent three young bloggers on a 365-day all expense paid journey around the world to investigate what makes young people happy. This program supplemented Coca-Cola’s “Open Happiness” campaign, which invited people around the world to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. Expedition 206 would specifically try to engage young people in their teens and 20’s in Coke’s “Open Happiness” campaign by using digital and social media to create interesting content.

The basic premise of the international campaign was that Coca-Cola could use its online presence to boost brand loyalty and drive positive media coverage of the brand. This idea was mostly based on research Coke had gained from studies. One consumer loyalty study showed that people who were more actively

engaged in Coca-Cola's online programs had a higher regard for the Coca-Cola brand than people who were less engaged.

Specifically, it revealed that those involved were 68 percent more likely to "exclusively love" Coke, while they were 43 percent more likely to "love" Coke and 31 percent more likely to "like" Coke.

The lesson they gained from these statistics was that if Coke could create a program to engage consumers online in a new way, they would be able to generate greater loyalty for the brand.

Coke knew that it had an opportunity to leverage its social media presence to connect with young audiences, but the obstacle was discovering how to accomplish that connection. How could Coca-Cola create interesting online content that would engage young people while driving buzz and positive media coverage?

Primary research from a 2008 Coca-Cola Happiness Institute study—which included 3,000 interviews and work with psychologists, and secondary research on the causes of happiness—revealed a correlation between happiness and "the smaller things in life." Based on this insight, Coke decided to showcase three normal people and their simple interactions with other normal young people to find the ingredients of happiness.

No celebrities were involved in this program. Instead, the three normal people, labeled “happiness ambassadors,” would interview others and document their discoveries on their laptops, cameras and phones.

People around the world were given the opportunity to vote online for the Expedition 206 happiness ambassadors from a pool of 60 candidates. The candidates used Twitter and Facebook to gain support, and in campaigning for votes, they served as spokespeople for the brand.

Expedition 206 kicked off on Jan. 1, 2010 in Madrid, Spain, in the city of the Coca-Cola Happiness Institute, which the ambassadors visited after celebrating New Years. In each of the 206 countries they visited, they asked passers-by what makes them happy and took photos on their phones. The traveling team also participated in special events. When they visited New York City, for instance, they attended the unveiling of Coke’s interactive Times Square billboard covered with photos of the team’s travels. This event was largely organized by Fast Horse.

While Coca-Cola reached its global audience through mass media publicity, it really achieved success by focusing efforts on local communities and publicizing those individual interactions on

social media. All of the ambassadors' adventures were shared in real-time over social media in order to attract young people, develop a worldwide dialogue about Coca-Cola and engage worldwide audiences. The ambassadors wrote blog posts, published photos to Flickr, posted YouTube videos, shared Facebook updates and tweeted about their locations, the people they met and even the troubles they faced along the way. Coca-Cola worked with Fast Horse to maintain its @x206hq Twitter account and manage Promoted Tweets, or Twitter ads, with the goal of increasing the visibility of the campaign and engagement with the Twitter account. Coca-Cola also updated the online press center that aided media and blogger outreach and served as a "news bureau."

This campaign was a hit. According to web analytics data, the campaign generated worldwide excitement from the beginning to the end. Seventy-five percent of happiness ambassador voters and 76 percent of total traffic to the expedition206.com website were from outside the United States. Since the campaign's launch, Expedition 206 has been the subject of more than 900 blog posts and online news stories. The website has had almost 900,000 page views with site visitors spending an

average of 6.5 minutes on the site per visit. In terms of social media, the main costs were the seven Promoted Tweets that ended up being viewed 124,105 times with more than 4,300 clicks, retweets and replies. Calculating the effectiveness of the campaign, the cost per impression was less than one cent.

Coca-Cola also managed to develop some strong partnerships through its local-market activations. One of these was with China's largest social networking site, QQ.com, which led to the creation of a program of adorning online QQ profiles with Expedition 206-themed virtual stamps. In a record-breaking campaign for QQ, one billion users collected and traded more than 10 billion stamps.

At the completion of the expedition, 3,000 people from 112 countries tuned in to a live Q&A event. Since its posting online, the webcast has been watched more than 21,000 times by people from 130 countries. The Expedition 206 campaign was covered by more than 400 media outlets even before its kick-off. Coverage came from a combination of traditional and social media, from outlets such as the Associated Press, BBC, Mashable, Fox Business News, LA Times, Telemundo, Univision, CNBC and JSYK.com.

Most importantly, Coca-Cola increased young peoples' engagement with the brand through social media and built up a fan base. The company's "brand love research" demonstrated that increased engagement with Coca-Cola's online programs leads to increased love of the brand. Over the course of this program, this translated into a significant increase in sales. With the team's initial introduction to the world in 2009, sales rose four percent. Sales continued to rise in the subsequent quarters, and Coke's official earnings report partly attributes this rise to the "Open Happiness" campaign and Expedition 206 since a number of the increases coincided with Expedition events.

Using social media as the central media outlet for such a large campaign was a relatively new concept, but it was effective because it was based on research and evidence, and used innovative ideas and creative methods. According to The National Press Club, creative methods are new and innovative ways of sending and consuming information, and keeping a brand ahead of its competition.

Mashable.com wrote, "The whole concept is pretty creative, inviting consumers not just to think about the product but the message of unity that Coca-Cola can bring to the world.

That's a difficult message to convey with traditional advertising.”

In other words, this campaign was exceptional because it had an overall, global message that targeted local publics through traditional advertising segmentation methods.

## Chapter 5

### International Public Relations Agencies

While the glocalized Coca-Cola campaign was developed by a medium sized agency, international, multi-million dollar clients such as Coca-Cola, tend to hire large agencies who employ several hundred practitioners worldwide. Many of these international agencies combine public relations, advertising and marketing, and call themselves “strategic marketing communications consultants” (Career Overview, 2004). Yet, it is important that they utilize glocal tactics to reach their target markets.

The largest international public relations agencies today are Hill & Knowlton, Burson-Marsteller, Edelman, Weber



Shandwick and Fleishman-Hillard. With net fees worldwide of \$265 million is Burson-Marsteller, which employs 2,100 practitioners. The second largest firm, Shandwick, is based in London. It has 1,750 employees worldwide and \$160 million in net fees. Interestingly, while Burson-Marsteller was primarily an American-based organization that expanded to foreign markets, Weber Shandwick worked primarily with European clients that were interested in expanding to the United States (Rudgard, 2003). The next four largest firms in the world, Porter Novelli International, Fleishman-Hillard, Edelman Public Relations Worldwide, and Ketchum Public Relations Worldwide, each employs more than 1,000 professionals (Cutlip, 2000).

Global organizations hire international public relations agencies for a number of reasons. Often, the organizations need more control and consistency over their worldwide communications. Many organizations do not have the resources or expertise to manage communications themselves. Even if they do have their own in-house public relations staffs, the teams might not have the right skills or market familiarity to make changes. For instance, in-house public relations teams might have experience with financial but not consumer public relations, or

they might only be familiar with the home market. Outside agencies, on the other hand, have specialists across many different practices with varied expertise and understandings of local media and culture. This gives them the ability to add localized touches to global campaigns. In addition, agencies have crisis communication plans in place and are prepared to face issues quickly (Rudgard, 2003).

Clients want tangible results. Today, this means showing them empirical evidence that their money has been used to bring them business success. According to Ariane Gut, Director of the Brand Research Group at FremantleMedia, where I interned during the summer of 2012, evaluating the effectiveness of a campaign is one of the most difficult and important responsibilities of a public relations practitioner. There must be a return on investments.

In a 2012 blog post on Fleishman-Hillard's Australia website, Chontelle Clark explained that there is no uniform public relations measuring standard:

“Every organization has different preferences when it comes to the way PR is measured and evaluated. Every agency, including Fleishman-Hillard, is different in this respect too, each

preferring a different range of measurement tools and techniques. Add to this that the media landscape is constantly changing, and the challenge in standardizing PR evaluation becomes clear.”

While best measurement tools and methods is a matter of controversy, all public relations professionals agree that the most important role of the agency is to help a company or organization build lasting relationships with their stakeholders. As more and more organizations seek to build stronger relationships with the community and generate positive reputations, the demand for public relations agencies, and in turn, public relations practitioners, will increase (Young, 2010). So while the public relations strategies will continue to undergo changes as environments change and people’s interests develop, the future of the public relations industry looks bright.

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## Summary of Capstone Project

According to *The Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, Research and Practice*, public relations is strategic communication used to establish and maintain symbiotic relationships with increasingly diverse publics (Sriramesh, 2009). In today's progressively more globalized world, where people are connecting more quickly than ever before through social media, it is vital that organizations know HOW to communicate correctly.

My main argument in this paper is that the best way to conduct international public relations work is through a "glocal"ized strategy, which combines global and local tactics.

In order to support this thesis, I analyzed local and global international public relations strategies and compared the public relations environments in countries around the world. This understanding of how publics in various countries differ gave me the information I needed to determine the best tactics for reaching them and helping companies effectively represent themselves to publics.

I introduce the subject of public relations in Chapter 1, where I describe its historical roots, its importance to companies

today, and the lack of empirical evidence available about how effective international public relations tactics have been. In Chapter 2, I discuss the two main public relations strategies—local strategies and global strategies—and their pros and cons. My conclusion is that global campaigns with localized tactics that cater to specific local groups would be most effective. Chapter 3 focuses on how culture—both societal culture and corporate culture—affect public relations. A comparison and analysis of the societal cultures of the United States, Mainland China, United Arab Emirates, Brazil and South Africa show that it is extremely important for public relations practitioners to employ strategies that cater to local populations, media and geography. This concept of glocalization is analyzed in depth in Chapter 4 through case studies of global brands that cater to specific markets using local tactics. The paper concludes with Chapter 5, which contains a discussion of top international public relations agencies and their contributions to large, worldwide companies.

This research project required interviews and extensive research of books, articles, blogs, interviews and case studies. I conducted over 40 literature reviews, comparing and contrasting various public relations theories. I also spoke with public relations

professionals around the world to gain insight into their day-to-day experiences with global campaigns.

My interest in international public relations was first sparked during my semester abroad in London, where I had the opportunity to observe public relations differences firsthand. When I noticed differences between the media and public relations industries in the United Kingdom and the United States, I decided to explore these differences further. As I traveled around Europe, I also became fascinated with and took note of the variations among people across the region.

Upon my return to the United States, I worked as a Brand Research Intern at FremantleMedia, a global company that produces programs such as “American Idol,” “America’s Got Talent” and “X-Factor.” In each country, the company produces a local version of the program, so that Australia has “Australia’s Got Talent,” and the UK has “Britain’s Got Talent.” I realized that targeting the programs to different market segments was extremely effective, and decided to research the best ways to reach different communities and cultures.

My Capstone findings reveal that working globally by selling standard products and services, while customizing

messages to local publics is the most effective way to reach a broad, loyal base of consumers. It is also the best way to attract the media, an extremely powerful and necessary tool that enables public relations practitioners to transmit messages to many people at once. Corporate communication strategies, for example, are best when they are country or city specific with precisely targeted messages, because they are more interesting to reporters. These targeted stories appeal directly to the news consumers. Therefore, it is vital that organizations understand the cultures in which they want to do business and how their target audiences receive information.

Just as medicine can heal people's bodies, effective public relations can heal relationships, and in today's world, relationships are just as important. As a public relations professional, I will be able to employ these strategies to improve communication with the public and, hopefully, make the world a more harmonious place.