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Organization-Public Relationships Practices in University Setting

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to share the explicate and the linkages among relationship management quality indicators, of organization-public relationship were; trust, commitment, community involvement, participation and satisfaction, and types of organization-public relationship status. Data was collected by using questionnaire. It was proved that effective public relations practices makes organizations more effective and views relationship management in an even more potent role to meet corporate value enhancing objectives. In doing that the organizations need/must re-examine their OPR practices from public perceptions about how it reflect its relationships management quality and become a competitive advantage in itself.

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1. Introduction

Public relations are an interactive form of communication in which the targeted audiences yield information and are not mere information consumers. Succinctly, the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), in its official statement on Public Relations, described public relations as helping our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony (Hendrix, 2001). The major roles of public relations include three functions (Wilcox, Ault, Agee & Cameron, 2001). First, management function that creates, develops and carries out policies and programmes to influence opinion or public reaction about an idea, a product or an

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organization, as well as improves the mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the targeted groups. Second, the promotion of a favourable image - in other words, the practice or profession establishes, maintains or improves a favourable relationship between an institution or person and the public. Third, shaping public image i.e. the relationship between an organisation, or person and the public, with respect to whether the organisation or person is seen in a positive or negative light.

Like all human endeavours, an organization, is never devoid of crises, both internal and external. The success of public relations in building a mutually beneficial organisation-public relationship would depend on an effective public relation practice. Related to this, there are a limited number of academic articles focused on a university setting, especially on its image, identity and reputation (Brunner, 2004; Hon & Brunner, 2001). This paper will make several contribution to academia and to industry in ensuring the attainment of organizational and public goals among which are, creating and sustaining an effective image, identity, and reputation.

2. Problem statements

The conceptualization of public relation as relationship management between an organization and its public has been gaining momentum among public relations scholars and practitioners. It is because they do realize that any organization, whether it wants it or not, has public relation. The trick is to establish a good organization and public relationship. Yet, out of those massive definitions, in 1985, Cultip *et al.*, defined public relation as the management function that identifies, establishes, and maintains mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and the various public in two-way communication on whom its success or failure depends. Moreover, Grunig and Huang's (2000) view that public relations makes organizations more effective by building relationships with strategic publics and views relationship management in an even more potent role within the organization by acting upon its wider intangible and tangible assets to meet corporate value enhancing objectives.

Kathleen Ladd Ward, former chair of the Public Relations Society of America's Research Committee, wrote in 1998 that although communications are important, the ultimate objective of public relations is to build and maintain beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. Ledingham and Bruning (2000) extend this view of public relations as a relationship practice to obtain quality relational outcomes through optimal initiation and maintenance strategies (Ledingham *et al.*, 1999; Rosli & Adwan, 2013). Nevertheless, public relations scholars studying public relationships have attempted to explicate the financial contribution of effective public relations. It helps an organization make money by cultivating positive relationships with strategic stakeholders such as donors, consumers, shareholders and legislators who have power to influence whether organizational goals can be attained (Jo *et al.*, 2004). Yet, the bad relationship can be resulted as the effect of ineffective public relation.

Bruning and Ledingham (1998) went on to suggest five essential organization public-relationship factors: openness, trust, involvement, investment, and commitment. They also posited that the organization-public relationship has multiple factors on status: professional, personal and community. More recently, Hon and Grunigs (1999) add some more indicators. They are trust, commitment, local or community involvement, and reputation, by which public relation will be able to enhance knowledge and establish awareness through recall and recognition. The public relations practices of any organisation is the major link between the organisation and its publics act as probes of the organization.

Organization-public relationship (O-PR) activities and functions can help the universities to be effective in achieving its stated goals and objectives. Indeed, within the context of O-PR, Grunig and Huang (2000) argue that public relations can help organizations to be more effective by maintaining relationships with their publics. And how can O-PR help achieve university effectiveness? It is proposed here, university's effectiveness can be measured by looking at whether the O-PR activities can help enhance the university's performance, especially on their academic quality, emotional engagement and touch with their students. The main question that arises at this point is – how, why and to what level does OP-R add to the accomplishment of organizational objectives? (Rhee, 2004).

This was the question posed in a research foundation, and the question was tackled by a group of six researchers (Grunig, Grunig, Dozier, & Ehling, 2002). These researchers added to the original question with what they considered as the excellence question: How must public relations be practiced and the communication function organized for it to contribute most to organization? (Grunig, 1992). The IABC team as they were called came to the conclusion that organizations are only effective when they choose to achieve those goals which satisfies their self-interest as well as the interests of the public they are dealing with (Grunig, Grunig, & Ehling, 1992). Therefore, effective practiced in public relation is widely needed to manage good relationships, show its impact toward

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