

Reflecting on the Media Conference: Benefit Cosmetics and Animal Testing

The application of public relations theory to a real-world situation was made possible by the recent mock media conference, which highlighted Benefit Cosmetics and its belief on animal testing in collaboration with PETA. As a PETA activist, I wanted to raise ethical concerns about animal abuse and fight for cruelty-free actions. In my reflections, I will explain the team relationships, learning goals, challenges, and insights I gained from the conference, as well as how they relate to the public relations theories provided throughout the semester.

The value of teamwork and effective communication in public relations was demonstrated by the team's participation in this mock media conference. The media conference was made up of teammates with a variety of skill levels among the team members. Our team was well-organized, with specific positions for the CEO (Tawona), moderator (Zephora) and me, the PETA activist. The group collaborated well to establish the main points of discussion and strategies for the press conference throughout the planning phase. We made sure that everyone knew exactly what their position was and what the conference's expected results. This experience emphasized how crucial it is for team members to communicate clearly. Our total success was made possible by the ideas of active listening, and effective communication. But I discovered that my anxiety prevented me from contributing as well as I planned during the media conference. Despite my personal struggles, the team was encouraging. However, I appreciated the team's support, which inspired me to overcome my difficulties throughout the session.

The mock media conference highlighted many key learning goals in public relations theory. One of the most key outcomes from this experience was an enhanced awareness of Grunig and Hunt's two-way symmetrical model of public relations, which promotes open communication between an organization and its public with the goal of mutual understanding and collaboration (Grunig, 2001).

By addressing the company's history of animal testing and highlighting its commitment to cruelty-free methods, Benefit Cosmetics CEO acknowledged that the company follows this approach and encouraged transparent, moral communication that aims to improve understanding between stakeholders. This strategy, which is essential to modern public relations, emphasizes ethical behaviour and transparency, two things that current customers are becoming more and more demanding.

The agenda-Setting Theory, which claims that the media gives people ideas to consider rather than telling them what to think, was also emphasized during the conference (McCombs, 1978). My responsibility as a PETA activist was to raise awareness of the problem of animal cruelty in the cosmetics business. I wanted to raise awareness of this issue and encourage the media and public to give it top priority when making ethical purchasing decisions by focusing on the suffering that animals experience in labs.

Additionally, Benefit Cosmetics and I, the PETA activist, played a significant role in shaping the narratives. This is where Framing Theory comes in. The audience and media's opinion of the company's actions was shaped by the way we addressed the animal testing controversy. The CEO emphasized the company's commitment to cruelty-free procedures going forward but framed their engagement as a mandatory consequence of operating in countries where testing is required by law. However, my framing focused on ethical and emotional aspects of the misery that animals undergo. This comparison of frames demonstrated the various ways in which stakeholders utilize framing to influence public opinion and draw attention to specific aspects of a problem.

Moreover, based on module 7 we learnt, many stages involved in public relation context, from the awareness stage, where information is conveyed to the public, to the action stage, where public opinion is expressed (Van Leuven & Slater, 1991). By this conference, we aimed our strategies at informing and influencing the audience's opinion of animal cruelty positively, targeting people who are in awareness stage.

Challenges are an inherent part of any project, and our media conference was no exception. Despite the overall success of the mock media conference, we encountered several challenges. The most significant challenge I faced was public speaking. My nervousness affected my ability to speak clearly and fluently, even though I had prepared my script and felt confident about the content. It was disappointing as I felt that I did not represent my viewpoint as well as I had hoped. When compared to my teammates, who spoke with confidence and clarity, I found it difficult to keep myself composed. When facing challenging questions from the media, the CEO and the moderator showed excellent leadership and speaking abilities.

This experience made me realize how important it is for public relations professionals to be able to handle media questions. Despite having properly planned for my speeches, I was underestimating the power of social anxiety. I discovered that to feel more confident in my position, I should have practiced in front of an audience more. As I was expected to raise sympathy and increase awareness of the suffering caused to animals in testing labs as a PETA activist. However, it was challenging for me to express this information.

One insight I gained at the mock press conference is that responding to inquiries from the media is a very stressful situation. Ensuring that the content remained relevant and engaging for our target audience was also another constant challenge. We wanted to establish a balance between in-depth discussions with relatable content. In retrospect, overcoming this obstacle served as an example of how crucial audience centricity and flexibility are in PR and communications.

Overall, the mock media conference was a helpful learning experience that improved my understanding of public relations. This assessment gave us an effective summary of all the public relations content we covered in this unit and was an excellent way to evaluate our level of professionalism and personal presentation ability, both of which will be useful in the job in the future.

References

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