Public Relations and Research Journey

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1. Research Plan

1.1 Introduction

In the current business environment, more and more companies understand their direct reliance on society and the necessity to cultivate friendly relationships with the public. The gradual transitions in the market economy have demanded new business approaches to business principles, especially in the realm of public relations (Edwards and Hodges, 2011). In the current business environment, the business interactions with the public have become the forefront of numerous businesses. The public relations (PR) mechanisms act as an engine of product promotion and thus ensure the success of a firm, and guarantee a high reputation in the face of fierce competition. Although the main objective of businesses is to raise their sales, this does not preclude the necessity to utilise Public Relations techniques to incorporate the interests of customers and the behaviour (Freberg, Remund and Keltner-Previs, 2013). Creating and maintaining proper relationships with the public make consumers feel at ease with working with the firm. Cultivating proper relationship with the public increases the sales and revenue for the firm, as consumers want to buy from companies they recognise and respect. Hence, it is essential to have public relations activities within the firm, which help to integrate the company’s actions with the wider public (Edwards and Hodges, 2011). However, there is no clear defined norm or guideline on PR, and thus companies focus on their internally developed approaches, or strategies constructed by hired PR agencies (de Andrade, 2014). The lack of focus on PR is obvious, and, hence, companies tend to take different approaches to cultivating relationships with the public.

In this regard, this study seeks to exploit ways to make public relations more effective, as the success of an organisation largely depends on the public relations management of the company. The genre of this study is analytical research, as it seeks to examine the issues that make public relations more effective. The study, therefore, exploits the issues that plague public relations and offer a diagnosis for those issues. This study also seeks to find proper ways of making pubic relationships more effective. The study of the issues affecting public relations offers opportunities of creating strong brand awareness and long-term recognition of its expertise. Public relations carry credibility because publicity, whether it is internet, broadcast, or print, represents a third party endorsement. Hence, this study seeks to exploit means of ensuring that companies use public relations effectively to enhance their credibility in the society. This study carries this research by exploring both primary and secondary data. The use of primary and secondary data ensures that the study is able to ascertain the validity of the research by examining secondary sources. Furthermore, secondary data support the findings from the primary data. Hence, the study reviews the current trends in public relations and establishes the issues they face and also offers a diagnosis for the problems.

1.2 Research Statement

The main objective of this research is to find ways to make public relations more effective, as the success of an organisation largely depends on the public relations management of the company.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How can a company develop an effective relationship with the public?
2. What are the factors affecting the public image of an organisation?
3. What are the necessary aspects of implementing public relations in an organisation?

1.4 Research Intention

The purpose of conducting this study is to establish all the aspects that influence PR in an enterprise and find solutions that make it more effective. Furthermore, the conduct of this study would help establish a focus on the various scholarly articles that exist, especially on issues affecting Public Relations, and enhance the standard approach to PR.

1.5 Methodology

The aim of this study is to evaluate ways to make public relations more effective, as the success of an organisation largely depends on the public relations management of the company. In this regard, the study adopts a descriptive research design. According to Flick (2015), descriptive research design is utilised as it enables the adequate collection of data of people’s opinions, habits, and attitudes. The data collection method and tool adopted for this study are primary and secondary approaches. The primary approaches of collection are the ones that gather information through data collection instruments. Bell (2014) noted that the secondary approaches are the analysis of information through evaluation of existing sources, such as books and journals. The data collection tool used in this study is questionnaires. Questionnaires would help to obtain personal opinion and facts about Public Relationships. The target markets for this study are PR employees, or marketing employees with previous PR experience (O'Leary, 2013). The following study considered all the necessary aspects of ethical requirements for the conduct of research. The study adhered to the schools’ ethical requirements, and all questionnaires would be followed by an ethical compliance certificate from the schools’ ethical committee (Ghosh, 2015).

1. The Publication Piece
   1. Introduction

An academic piece for a journal is chosen because it reports in detail the issues affecting public relations and their related solutions. Public relations (PR) are activities focussed on cultivating a positive opinion about the firm and sustaining mutual beneficial relationships. The purpose of PR helps to develop relationships with the public, as it establishes two-way communication to recognise common interests or common ideas and mutual understanding that is founded on full awareness, knowledge, and truth (Dimitrov, 2015). The PR notions and concepts are consumer focuses, whilst consumer intimacy is a concept generated with the idea that companies have focussed on delivering key values and prepositions to key market segments. This is not the idealistic or altruistic view where companies seek to deliver value to consumers at any cost but, rather, a hard-edged business concept that acknowledges a long-term business relationship, which is likely to be attained when satisfied consumers keep returning. Public relations facilities boost the firms’ credibility because they cultivate relationships through various trusted intermediaries (Duhring, 2015). The intermediaries tend to communicate at a certain trusted source, which helps to filter out all the unnecessary gimmicks and information. The credibility of the intermediaries helps to cultivate a good source of relationship with the wider public. In the current business environment, trying to specifically make a good name for the company in the community is likely to be priority for any executive, as it is vital for the long-term success of the business. In this regard, it is necessary to examine how to develop effective public relations, factors affecting public relations, and implementing public relation strategy in a firm. The following journal examines the above issues and offers a necessary diagnosis of the problems to make public relations more effective in cultivating relationships with the public.

* 1. How can a company develop effective public relations?

An effective public relationship may be cultivated through a wide range of activities. A study by Edwards and Hodges (2011) developed the RACE (research, action, communication, evaluation) acronym; Freberg, Remund and Keltner-Previs (2013) developed the ROPE (research, objectives, programming and evaluation) acronym; Fitch (2015) constructed the RAISE formula (research, adaptation, implementation, strategy, and evaluation) acronym; Willis (2012) posits ROPES (research, objectives, programme, evaluation, stewardship); and Kowal (2016) established the ROSIE (research, objectives, strategy, implementation, evaluation) acronym as means of developing public relationships with an organisation. However, numerous scholars consider the process of creating public relationships with an enterprise as a four-step process. Similarly, Holladay and Coombs (2013) indicated that the four steps of developing public relationships include an analysis of the environment, recognition of the objectives and audience, and the development of the strategic approach and execution plan. Thus the process of developing public relationships is a deliberate process, which is both an accurate and descriptive process. Hence, as a deliberate process, the development of public relations must occur in a sequential procedure. Hwang (2012) stated that careful planning is required to develop public relationship with an organisation, as it helps to avoid unwarranted assumptions, which may prove costly. In addition, careful planning helps organisations to become proactive in establishing relationships with the public and preventive rather than reactive and remedial. According to Waymer (2012), the most successful PR agencies have embedded planning and research components in their work, imbedding them in their activities. The initial step of developing a public relationship is to analyse the situation (Fitch, 2014). Analysis of the situation helps all the planners, colleagues, supervisors, and decision-makers to be in agreement with the nature of the PR process and the issues to be addressed in the programme. Secondly, Vercic, Zerfass and Wiesenberg (2015) indicate that an analysis of the organisation is necessary to offer a candid and careful look of three aspects of the firm. The three aspects are (1) its public perception (reputation) and (2) its internal environment (competitors and supporters). Thirdly, Smith (2013) posits that analysing the public is necessary, as various different people and groups interact with the company. It helps to establish priorities amongst various public groups that interact with the company. Fourth, setting goals and objectives is necessary to create the ultimate position for the organisation (Maier, 2015). This helps to cultivate a clear, measurable, and specific objective, which helps to establish the firm’s hope for effect on the awareness, acceptance, and actions for every key public. Fifth, Meng (2013) creates action and response strategies that are necessary as they offer a range possible actions available to the firm and help the firm to cultivate what it would do in various situations. Every action and response strategy entails creating public relations and responses. Sixthly, it entails developing the message strategy through which the firm would present the message in key publics. The content of the message contains a certain style and tone, nonverbal and verbal cues, and related problems. Seventh, Culbertson et al. (2012) select the communicating tactics, which seek various communication options, and, in this case, it considers a range of communication options, which are (1) organisational media; (2) face-to-face communication, and the opportunities for individual development; (3) advertising and promotional media, which may be another form of controlled media; and (4) new media, which are the uncontrolled media. Eight, implementing the strategic plan, which translates the raw ingredients recognised in the steps above into a raw and successful PR and marketing communications campaign. In the implementation of the strategies, develop schedules and budgets. Finally, de Andrade (2014) posits that the strategists evaluate every level of the development of the strategy to establish if it is meeting the stated or underlying objectives.

* 1. What are the factors affecting the public relations of an organisation?

Tsetsura (2011) illustrates that, in spite of the emergence of the PR in the 21st century, professionals still find it difficult to access media outlets. In particular, the editors of the media agencies thoroughly scrutinised PR messages for quality, professionalism, and accuracy. The advent of internet technologies has hurt the credibility of PR messages significantly. According to Dimitrov (2015), any person with an internet connection can obtain PR messages within seconds; however, the promulgation of internet technologies has resulted in the discrediting of PR messages because of boasting and exaggeration. This has placed a significant demand on the background and credentials of PR campaigns. Thus companies seek third parties or referent figures to endorse the message or support the PR claims. The lack of credibility has caused genuine PR claims to be discredited and untruthful, because of the internet connections. In addition, Edwards and Hodges (2011) indicate that multiple channels have hindered the development of public relationships, as companies face myriad challenges of selecting the most appropriate pathway. For instance, the PR campaign may focus on text messages to attract young people, and then switch to an email campaign to attract grown-ups, and companies may use traditional media outlets to target the senior members of the society. Similarly, Maier (2015) posits that the multiplicity of the channels exposes PR to mistakes, which may hamper the ability to utilise any channel that is effective. For instance, a wrong-worded text message may cause negative reviews. However, Waymer (2012) posits that social media are a PR’s dream, as they enable companies to transverse across national and regional boundaries into the international markets instantaneously. Furthermore, new social media technologies help various social media sites to be linked together, and this enables a cross-platform PR campaign. This stretches the boundaries of the PR campaign and enables companies to establish public relationships across various platforms. In spite of this, Willis (2012) indicates it is difficult to measure the success of public relationships created through social media. For instance, Facebook users tend to object the advertisements and PR messages that appear in their timelines. The level of ignorance of PR messages in the social media sites is highly significant . In this regard, Smith (2013) companies are facing significant challenges of designing PR messages in a manner that users will welcome or accept them. However, Kent (2013) noted that the emergence of social media analytics may be used to obtain data on the acceptance of PR messages; still, the companies face significant challenge of measuring the actual impact of their campaign on the public. According to Hwang (2012), the development of two-way PR has resulted in the creation of public relationships in an easier manner; however, with the advancement of technology, the public are able to reply to messages in a rapid manner, and, hence, this raises the need to hire additional personnel to keep up with the responses. Furthermore, Holladay and Coombs (2013) posit that organisation must become extremely flexible and be prepared to alter their messages to obtain feedback of their target audience. According to Edwards and Hodges (2011), the blurring line between the internal and external communications poses significant challenges of cultivating public relationships. As the line between internal and external communication continues to blur, the old separations between conventional communication audiences are increasingly blurring, and this has hampered the ability of the companies to control their messages (Jun, 2011). Hence, public reputation can rise and fall in a single Facebook post or Tweet, and, hence, companies must continuously review the responses. In the current digital environment, trending topics tend to occupy much of the digital world, particularly social media sites, and, hence, companies must seek to control communication through trending topics. Trending topics must cultivate interest in the PR world, as they help companies to stretch their influences from the local to the global stage. For instance, on Twitter, a topic may trend from the local to the international market, and this means that more and more people are discussing that message, and this offers significant opportunities to the company, especially for creating public relationships (Wilcox, 2011). The public prefers to interact with trend creators, and thus PR function must seek to cultivate a proper image by fostering positive trends in the society. However, de Andrade (2014) posits as much as trending topics that offer significant opportunities for companies; it may also destroy PR campaigns instantaneously through negative trends. Additionally, Duhring (2015) indicates that the constant creation of positive trends is a significant challenge, as it is hard to cultivate a trend that resonates with all people in the global market. Hence, most PR firms tend to tailor their PR messages to suit the local settings, and this may hamper the strategies of companies, especially regarding to their standardisation and localisation strategies.

* 1. What are the necessary aspects of implementing public relations in an organisation?

According to a study by Freberg, Remund and Keltner-Previs (2013), the implementation of a public relationship strategy by a company needs to follow a certain set of rules and guidelines to ensure success and the attainment of set objectives. Furthermore, the implementation strategy must have established measurable outcomes or actions, which every stakeholder or public group needs to fulfil to ensure success of the strategy. Wilcox (2011) noted that the present technology-enabled society has offered various communication channels, and thus the company must ensure that they have identified the channels to be utilised, as per their target market, and the measurable action for those channels. Similarly, Avidar (2013) indicates that every communication activity must be founded on an objective, either a result or process objective; hence, completing all the planned actions means that all the objectives have been attained. This, according to Culbertson et al. (2012), signifies the attainment of the objective. For instance, if an executive wants to alter the company’s corporate culture and align it with the public, first, he or she must discuss with the relevant stakeholders before creating the communication plan and what measurable and observable conduct will be different if people respect one another more and cultivate integrity. Once the behaviours that reflect every cultural objective have been described, the conduct may be ascertained before and after the communication strategy has been executed. Duhring (2015) posits that the results must be measured against the set objectives that should be written in quantifiable terms to view how closely actual results for every objective have met the intended objective. Thus de Andrade (2014) indicates that, in totality, every component results in the implementation strategy should add up to the overall objective so that the overall plan is attained.

1. Chapter Four: Discussions and Analysis

There are numerous approaches of developing suitable public relationship. The approaches highlight the similar but distinct approaches to developing public relationships. The study established that there are nine approaches to developing public relationships; the nine steps are essential, as they are comprehensive and all-inclusive, and they cover all the details that are required. The nine steps of developing public relationships include: (1) analysing the situation, (2) analysis of the organisation, (3) public analysis, (4) setting goals and objectives, (5) creating action and response strategies, (6) developing the message strategy, (7) selecting the communicating tactics, (8) implementing the strategic plan, and (9) evaluation of the strategic plan.

The rapid development of internet technologies has negatively affected the credibility of public relations. Internet technologies tend to discriminate proper public relations messages by boasting and exaggeration, and this renders those messages as untruthful. As a result of the discrediting, companies seek referent figures or third parties to enhance the credibility of their messages. Furthermore, the proliferation of technological development has resulted in the emergence of myriad pathways, and this hampers the ability of the company to utilise the most appropriate way to target their clients. The emergence of new concepts, such as social media have offered new challenges, as companies are unable to evaluate the PR strategy. It is hard to track the performance of the PR messages used in the social media campaigns. Furthermore, companies are only able to capture the attention of social media users for a very short time, as they tend to have a low concentration span, as they are likely to become disrupted by other activities. Hence, the PR function faces significant challenges of developing the appropriate messages, which would capture the attention of the users.

The emergence of two-way communications facilitated by the emergence of technologies have resulted in the need for companies to hire extra staff to ensure that the company keeps in constant contact with the firm. Companies have to respond rapidly to the changes in the environment in order to keep up with the responses. The blurring line between the internal and external communications poses significant challenges of cultivating public relationships, as it hampers the ability of the firms to control their messages to the public. As a result of the constant diminishing boundaries, the company’s reputation may rise and fall instantaneously. It is becoming extremely difficult to manage the firm’s public relationships, as things are constantly changing, and the firm must adequately respond to these changes. In the current fast-paced business environment, the PR strategies tend to shift instantaneously in response to the changing environment, and this may be inconsistent with the company’s strategies for the international market. Companies face challenges of attempting to tailor their approaches to suit the local business environment and respond to the drastic changes in the society, especially if the firm uses standardisation strategies.

The implementation of PR strategies should stick with strict measurable outcomes and actions, as this would guarantee the success of the strategy. In strategy implementation, companies must ensure that they have aligned their strategic components with the various delivery channels to ensure that they meet the organisational goals and objectives. The various communication channels that are used for strategy implementation must have their measurable activities and outcomes. Thus every strategic communication adopted by the firm in the execution of PR tactics must be based on an objective. The results of the implementation must be measured against the overall objectives to ensure success.

1. Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations
   1. Recommendation

In cultivating public relationships, companies must adopt the nine-step-based strategy, as it is all-inclusive and detailed to ensure that the firm’s tactics are effective and successful in the environment. Companies must utilise trustworthy delivery channels to ensure that they do not hamper the credibility of their messages. The PR strategies should be implemented with a trust figure, which helps in the delivery of the message to the public and also helps in obtaining trust from the public. Companies must leverage across the opportunities presented by new technologies and communication channels to ensure that they cultivate effective public relationships. The myriad pathways of communication offer significant opportunities for companies to develop their PR campaigns. Thus companies must utilise new mediums, such as Facebook and Twitter, to develop their PR strategies. Here, they must employ new PR strategists that help to ensure that the company creates positive flow of trending topics, which create public relationships. In addition, the PR strategies would ensure that communication with the public is constant and flowing. PR strategies must be aligned with the cultural environment to ensure that it is relevant to the public. The implementation of PR strategies must follow measurable and strict actions and outcomes. The company must select the most appropriate channel or channels of delivery, and these channels must have defined outcomes and activities. Measure these delivery channels that must have quantifiable outcomes, which would be, ultimately, against the overall objective to ensure success. The implementation process must be continuously evaluated to ascertain whether it meets the overall objectives.

* 1. Conclusion

The present business environment faces significant PR issues, and this study explored those issues and offered solutions. In this regard, the above recommendations must be implemented to ensure success in cultivating relationships with the public. The process of developing relationships with the public is a deliberate process, which follows strategic procedures. Hence, careful planning must be adapted to ensure success in PR activities. However, the current business environment faces significant issues that plague the PR industry. This study proposes a nine-step process of developing effective public relations campaigns, which ensure that companies develop effective and proactive plans, and this guarantees that companies would not go into the market unprepared and short-sighted. The issues affecting public relationships are numerous, such as emergence of new communication channels that highlight the need for companies to exploit these opportunities. The PR implementation process should be deliberate and based on measurable outcomes, which are in line with the overall objective. This study adopted a descriptive research design, which fosters the collection of data through questionnaire approach. The study established that a nine-step process of developing a relationship with the public is ideal, as it is comprehensive and detailed. The advancement of technology creates significant challenges to PR; however, it should exploit the emergent opportunities. Companies that exploit the new opportunities that emerge with technological advancement would create positive relationships with the public. This study explored the issues that influence PR; however, more research needs to be carried out to ascertain PR issues in a more specific context, such as in Australia.

1. The Research Journey

I chose the topic ‘developing public relationship’ because of the interest I have in public relations. Ever since I was young, I have liked working with people and solving problems, and public relations offer chances to do so. PR offers numerous opportunities, which are applicable to various occupations (Austin and Toth, 2011). The flexible nature of PR and its ability to fit in numerous circumstances and in all industries is appealing to me. PR permits me to develop a career, which allows me to interact with the public and promote an image (Gordon, 2011). The study of issues that affect PR would enable me to recognise the solutions, which can be adapted in campaigning, and how they come about and how important and effective the campaign may be. Hence, gaining a comprehensive understanding of public relations is necessary to enable me to become more knowledgeable about my interests and, also, become abreast of the issues that plague the industry, and how they may be addressed (Kowalski, 2011). This topic helps in focusing on the solutions of addressing the underlying problems. The conduct of this research was based on underlying concepts and theories, which enhance the best chances of obtaining solutions to the issues that affect PR. The research approaches adopted by the study help in developing the appropriate techniques for this research and, also, the development of data collection tools for the study. The methodology used in this study is based on the underlying premises of attaining the overall objectives of the study. The methodology is selected because it offers the best way of attaining the research objectives (Flick, 2015). This research utilised both primary and secondary data collection approaches, and, hence, it gathers both first-hand and second-hand information. In this regard, it obtained information from the web and non-web resources, and the later resources offered challenges; however, these challenges created chances to find solutions. For instance, obtaining information from respondents was challenging; however, adapting to their time and schedule helped in alleviating some of the challenges (O'Leary, 2013).

Arranging the work in a coherent and consistent manner is based on the prior planning that was carried out. Research planning entails arranging the research project in a coherent and logical manner, and, also, creating schedules, using Gantt charts to ensure that the study is carried in a consistent manner. Conducting a research plan prior to the study was essential in ensuring that the study is carried out in a coherent manner. The research plan helped in cultivating the presentation of my study. The research plan helps in articulating the target audience, and, since the study seeks to exploit issues affecting PR, planning helped to position the study with its genre and target audience. The target audience for this study was selected based on the objectives of the study, as it relates with them. The genre of the study was founded on the approaches that the study was utilised to obtain the research objectives. The writing style of the target audience and genre were conducted in reference with the school research standards and requirements. The layout and style of the paragraphs are aligned and space, as per the research standards (Ghosh, 2015). The layout of the paragraphs was carried out in a logical and consistent approach to ensure a constant flow of the information. The layouts of the paragraphs were carried out in consistent with the requirements. The choice of the vocabulary is based on easy and simple words to ensure understanding. The research plan decisions about the research style and paragraphs were based on a logical flow of ideas and, also, the length; they are not too long to spoil their lustre. The lecture played a significant role in developing the research project; it helped to instil the knowledge and skills of conducting research (Bell, 2014). Furthermore, the lecture materials offered real-life examples on how to carry out research, and, hence, they help to offer clarity of the study. The literature materials are linked to the research materials, as they help to instil understanding of the complicated issues of research.

The conduct of this study was carried out with the help of a friend, George. George offered instrumental assistance, especially in helping to structure and arrange the study in a logical and consistent manner. The arrangement of the study was based on the premise of the research plan; however, issues emerged during the conduct of the study as unforeseen circumstances and issues emerged, and this occasion necessitated changes in the structure of the study. In addition, George helped in the collection of questionnaire data from the respondents, as well as the analysis. The analysis of the respondents’ data was complicated, and, hence, it necessitates the use of some assistance. George’s assistance was helpful, as it helped in delegating some tasks and activities, and helped in the managing the costs and time that was running low. George’s assistance was essential in ensuring timely conclusion of the research study. Although research planning is essential in ensuring that the research is completed within the set timelines and resources, it is necessary to ensure that the plan is flexible to ensure that it accounts for unforeseen circumstances that may arise. The next research project would be carried out with due regard of time management, as it ensures that it is completed in a timely manner. This would be achieved through considering flexibility in the planning of the research project, which helps in accounting for unforeseen circumstances. One of the significant challenges is getting institutions to participate in the study, and, hence, it necessitates constant persistence. In the next research, I would not stop at the first research to persevere, pursue alternate avenues, and cultivate more relationships that are meaningful.

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