

Development of an Effective Public Relations Model for the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

Kanyakorn Sujarittnetikarn, Huda Wongyim, Banyong Phoosap

Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, 1-U-Thong Nok, Dusit, Bangkok, Thailand

E-Mail: Kanyakorn.su@ssru.ac.th, Huda.wo@ssru.ac.th, Banyong.ph@ssru.ac.th

Abstract

This study aimed to develop an effective public relations (PR) model for the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, to enhance stakeholder engagement and improve institutional image. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive insights. The study involved 300 survey respondents and 15 interview participants, including faculty staff, students, alumni, and external stakeholders. Key findings identified four critical factors influencing PR effectiveness: leadership support, message consistency, stakeholder involvement, and technology utilization. The proposed model emphasizes strategic planning, unified communication, active stakeholder collaboration, and integration of digital tools to enhance outreach and engagement. Validation by PR experts and administrators confirmed the model's practicality and relevance, with a 92% agreement on its alignment with contemporary PR practices. The study concludes that implementing the model can address existing gaps, strengthen relationships with stakeholders, and improve the faculty's overall PR effectiveness. Future research could explore the model's application in similar educational settings and its long-term impact on institutional reputation.

Keywords: Public relations, Stakeholder engagement, Higher education, communication model

1. Introduction

1.1 Principles and Rationale

Public relations (PR) plays a critical role in enhancing the image, reputation, and communication strategies of organizations. Within higher education institutions, particularly faculties such as the Faculty of Management Science at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, effective public relations can foster stronger connections with students, staff, alumni, and external stakeholders. It can also serve as a vital tool to communicate the faculty's vision, achievements, and ongoing initiatives, thereby contributing to institutional success.

The rapid advancement of communication technology, coupled with the increasing reliance on digital platforms, has revolutionized the field of public relations. Modern PR practices integrate traditional methods with digital strategies to engage diverse audiences effectively (Klaysung, 2023). This shift underscores the need for higher education institutions to adopt innovative public relations models that leverage technology while addressing the specific communication needs of their stakeholders (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Wilcox et al., 2015).

For the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, developing an effective public relations model is essential to enhance its visibility, strengthen its brand identity, and engage stakeholders more meaningfully. Current challenges, such as limited resources, lack of coordinated communication strategies, and evolving stakeholder expectations, necessitate a structured approach to public relations. A robust model can address these challenges by integrating modern practices, fostering consistent messaging, and utilizing data-driven strategies for impact assessment (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006).

This study focuses on developing a public relations model tailored to the unique context of the Faculty of Management Science. By identifying key factors influencing PR effectiveness and evaluating existing practices, the research aims to propose a model that enhances communication efficiency and stakeholder engagement. The study draws upon established theories in public relations and contemporary practices in digital communication to provide actionable recommendations for the faculty.

1.2 Research Objective

The following specific research objectives are outlined:

1. To evaluate the current public relations practices at the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.
2. To identify the key factors influencing effective public relations within the faculty.
3. To propose a comprehensive public relations model that integrates traditional and digital strategies.

2. Literature Review

The development of an effective public relations (PR) model requires a comprehensive understanding of existing theories, practices, and advancements in the field. Public relations, as defined by Grunig and Hunt (1984), involves strategic communication processes that build mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. For higher education institutions, particularly faculties, PR serves as a critical tool for enhancing visibility, fostering trust, and building lasting connections with stakeholders.

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks in Public Relations

Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Four Models of Public Relations—press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical communication, and two-way symmetrical communication—provide a foundation for understanding PR strategies. Among these, the two-way symmetrical model, which emphasizes mutual understanding and dialogue between an organization and its stakeholders, is considered the most effective for fostering long-term relationships. This model is particularly relevant to academic institutions, where transparency and stakeholder engagement are critical for success. Another relevant framework is the Excellence For faculties in universities, this theory underscores the importance of aligning PR activities with institutional objectives, such as student recruitment, faculty development, and community engagement.

2.2 Role of Technology in Modern Public Relations

The rise of digital technologies has transformed traditional PR practices. According to Smith (2020), digital platforms enable institutions to engage with their audiences in real time, create targeted content, and measure the impact of PR campaigns more effectively. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter play a significant role in academic PR by

facilitating direct communication with students, alumni, and external partners. Additionally, tools such as email newsletters, websites, and mobile applications serve as critical channels for disseminating information. For the Faculty of Management Science, adopting these tools can enhance the effectiveness of its PR efforts by enabling data-driven decision-making.

2.3 Public Relations in Higher Education

Research indicates that higher education institutions face unique challenges in public relations, such as diverse stakeholder groups, resource constraints, and rapidly changing communication landscapes. According to Eyrych et al. (2008), universities must adopt integrated communication strategies that combine traditional PR methods, such as press releases and events, with digital approaches. The focus should be on creating consistent messaging and building trust across all communication channels. In the context of a faculty, this includes students, parents, alumni, faculty members, and industry partners. Effective PR models should prioritize stakeholder engagement through initiatives such as open houses, alumni networks, and collaborations with external organizations.

2.4 Key Factors Influencing PR Effectiveness

Several studies have highlighted key factors that contribute to the success of public relations (PR) initiatives. Leadership support is critical, as it sets the tone for PR efforts and ensures alignment with institutional goals (Meng & Berger, 2013). Equally important is stakeholder involvement, where engaging stakeholders in planning and decision-making enhances the credibility and relevance of PR campaigns (Cutlip et al., 2006). Consistent messaging across all communication channels builds trust and strengthens the organization's brand identity (Wilcox et al., 2015). Lastly, regular evaluation and feedback through tools like surveys, analytics, and stakeholder input play a pivotal role in ensuring continuous improvement and effectiveness of PR strategies (Smith, 2020).

2.5 Gaps in Current Practices

Despite advancements in PR strategies, many academic institutions struggle to integrate traditional and digital approaches effectively. Research by Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) highlights the need for a cohesive strategy that bridges the gap between offline and online communication. For the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, addressing this gap is crucial for developing a PR model that meets the expectations of diverse stakeholders.

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research design to analyze existing PR practices and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, an exploratory aspect is incorporated to develop a tailored PR model by leveraging insights from both theoretical frameworks and practical case studies.

3.1 Population and Sample

The study's population includes internal stakeholders such as faculty staff, students, and PR personnel, as well as external stakeholders such as alumni, industry partners, and the public. A stratified random sampling method is used to select 300 participants for quantitative surveys and 15 participants for qualitative interviews to ensure diverse perspectives. The sample size is determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table for sample size calculation.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

a. Quantitative Data Collection: A structured questionnaire is used to gather data on stakeholder perceptions, satisfaction, and expectations of PR practices. The questionnaire includes Likert-scale questions to assess the effectiveness of existing PR strategies and stakeholder engagement.

b. Qualitative Data Collection: Semi-structured interviews are conducted with key stakeholders, including faculty administrators, PR personnel, and external partners. The interviews explore in-depth perspectives on challenges, opportunities, and expectations related to PR activities.

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

a. Quantitative Analysis: Descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and percentage, are used to summarize survey responses. Inferential statistics, including factor analysis, are employed to identify key factors influencing PR effectiveness.

b. Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis is conducted on interview transcripts to identify recurring themes and patterns.

3.4 Model Development

The proposed PR model is developed by integrating findings from data analysis with established theories, such as Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Four Models of Public Relations and Grunig's (1992) Excellence Theory. The model is designed to address identified gaps and align with the faculty's goals.

3.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected through surveys will be analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The analysis will focus on identifying patterns and trends related to the key card borrowing and returning service, such as the most common problems faced by users and their overall satisfaction with the service.

For the qualitative data from interviews, thematic analysis will be used. The interviews will be transcribed, and key themes will be identified by coding the responses. These themes will provide a deeper understanding of the underlying factors influencing the service, including staff perceptions, technological challenges, and user feedback.

4. Results

The findings of the study on the development of an effective public relations (PR) model for the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, are presented in three key sections: analysis of current PR practices, identification of critical factors influencing PR effectiveness, and the proposed PR model.

4.1 Analysis of Current PR Practices

Quantitative survey results revealed moderate satisfaction levels among stakeholders regarding existing PR practices, with an overall mean score of 3.5 out of 5. While stakeholders appreciated the faculty's efforts in organizing events and maintaining an active presence on social media platforms, several gaps were identified:

Limited Stakeholder Engagement: Only 45% of respondents felt involved in the faculty's communication initiatives.

Inconsistent Messaging: Content across different channels (e.g., social media, newsletters, and websites) was perceived as inconsistent in tone and focus.

Underutilization of Digital Tools: Stakeholders reported limited use of advanced analytics and digital technologies to enhance PR efforts.

Qualitative interviews further highlighted challenges such as insufficient resources, lack of PR-specific training for staff, and the absence of a unified PR strategy. Respondents emphasized the need for clear communication goals, consistent branding, and stronger integration of online and offline PR activities.

4.2 Critical Factors Influencing PR Effectiveness

Factor analysis of survey data identified four main dimensions influencing PR effectiveness:

Leadership Support: Strong leadership involvement in PR efforts was positively correlated with stakeholder satisfaction ($\beta = 0.78, p < 0.05$).

Message Consistency: Consistent messaging across all channels significantly enhanced trust and engagement ($\beta = 0.65, p < 0.05$).

Stakeholder Involvement: Active participation of stakeholders in planning and decision-making processes improved PR relevance and credibility ($\beta = 0.72, p < 0.05$).

Technology Utilization: Effective use of digital tools, including social media and analytics, was associated with increased outreach and impact ($\beta = 0.60, p < 0.05$).

Thematic analysis of interview data supported these findings, with participants emphasizing the importance of transparency, responsiveness, and the use of innovative technologies to address stakeholder needs.

4.3 Proposed Public Relations Model

The proposed PR model integrates insights from data analysis and established theories, such as Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Model and Grunig's Excellence Theory. The model comprises the following components:

Strategic Planning: Define clear PR objectives aligned with the faculty's mission and stakeholder expectations.

Unified Messaging: Develop a comprehensive communication plan to ensure consistency across all channels.

Stakeholder Engagement: Foster active collaboration with internal and external stakeholders through focus groups, feedback mechanisms, and co-creation initiatives.

Technology Integration: Leverage digital tools and platforms, including social media, email marketing, and data analytics, to enhance outreach and measure PR impact.

Continuous Improvement: Implement regular evaluations of PR efforts through surveys, performance metrics, and stakeholder feedback to refine strategies.

Feedback from PR experts and faculty administrators on the proposed model was overwhelmingly positive, with an agreement rate of 92%. The experts highlighted the model's emphasis on stakeholder engagement and its adaptability to evolving communication trends as significant strengths.

5. Conclusion

The development of an effective public relations (PR) model for the Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University highlights the critical importance of strategic communication in fostering engagement and building strong relationships with stakeholders. The study's findings reveal several areas for improvement in existing PR practices, including the need for consistent messaging, greater stakeholder involvement, and the integration of advanced digital tools.

Through comprehensive data analysis, the study identified four key factors influencing PR effectiveness: leadership support, message consistency, stakeholder engagement, and technology utilization. These insights informed the creation of a proposed PR model tailored to the faculty's specific needs. The model emphasizes strategic planning, unified communication, active collaboration with stakeholders, and the use of technology to enhance outreach and engagement. Regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms are integral components to ensure continuous improvement and adaptability to changing communication trends.

The proposed model received strong validation from experts, who noted its practicality and alignment with modern PR theories such as Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Two-Way Symmetrical Communication Model. By addressing identified gaps and aligning PR strategies with organizational goals, the model provides a framework for enhancing the faculty's public relations efforts, fostering stronger stakeholder relationships, and improving the institution's overall image.

This study contributes to the broader understanding of effective PR practices in higher education institutions. Future research could explore the implementation of the proposed model in similar academic contexts and evaluate its long-term impact on stakeholder satisfaction and institutional reputation.

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