

WHAT WILL THE FUTURE OF CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS LOOK LIKE?

Elena GURGU¹, Milena ILIC², Sabyasachi RATH³,
Ioana-Andreea GURGU⁴

¹ *Spiru Haret University, Faculty of Economic Sciences, Bucharest, 46 G
Fabricii Street, District 6, Bucharest, Romania,
Email: se_egurgu@spiruharet.ro*

² *Faculty of Contemporary Arts Belgrade, University Business Academy
in Novi Sad; Information Technology School ITS – Belgrade, Belgrade,
11000, Serbia, Email: milena.ilic@its.edu.rs*

³ *Vishwa Vishwani Institute of Systems and Management, Boston House,
Thumkunta (Post), Shamirpet Road, Via-Hakimpet, Hyd-500078,
Hyderabad, India, Email: profrath@gmail.com*

⁴ *University of Bucharest, Faculty of Psychology and Educational
Sciences, Panduri Street, No. 90, Bucharest, Romania,
Email: gurguioana99@yahoo.com*

How to cite: GURGU, E. ILIC, M., RATH, S., & GURGU, I.-A. (2022).
“What Will the Future of Creativity and Innovation in Public Relations Look
Like?” *Annals of Spiru Haret University. Economic Series*, 22(1), 243-264,
doi: <https://doi.org/10.26458/22115>

Abstract

In this paper we talk about creativity in public relations, that is clear that we need. For us, creativity in public relations can be a mean, a novel way to accomplish an objective more easily, more efficiently and more quickly. It is clear that every client appreciates creativity, but in many situations it does not translate into events or visible messages for a mass audience and then it is not visible. We also talk in our paper about the profile of a creative relationist, that must be: involved, informed, avid after work, possessing theoretical knowledge, having flexible and positive thinking, being visionary. In this paper

Issue 1/2022

we will try to demonstrate that creativity can occur in one of the following situations: either in strategy (positioning, planning), or in execution (tactics, presentation materials, information).

Keywords: *public relations; creativity; innovation; IoT; tactics; digital storytelling.*

JEL Classification: M14, M31, M37

Introduction

Public relations itself is a creative job: it asks daily to the public relations specialist to find specific communication solutions to specific situations. We often wonder if there is a place of creativity in the world of corporate communication?! Sure it is, just as it is in the corporate environment, because this environment is addressed to it. Creativity must always emphasize the message we have to communicate, and not eclipse, or, even worse, trivialize it. As an extreme, we remember corporate presentations or events that we could not track because of boredom, and in the other extreme we have examples of sparkling presentations from which we have not learned too much.

What is tried every time is to find the optimal balance (not dare to say perfectly) between the message, the form and the delivery, in such a way that PRist's words reach the target, be understood and assumed. It is not spectacular at all, but this is reality. Because the information transmitted by all these modern means can be made available to the public, the target of the organizations requires communication professionals and requires a lot of creativity, too.

Creativity in public relations can also be defined as the ability to create something new by joining two or more elements in a novel context in order to create value added to a task. A creative act is not just about initiating added value, but also about evaluating it. It must produce a value to be recognized by a third person.

Public relations in innovative companies can strengthen brand value by communicating innovation processes and adding value to innovation by developing narratives for new products and services in parallel with technological and business development. The development of innovation communication and PR will benefit from the emergence of independent innovation journalism.

Literature review

Creativity varies through seduction

Public relations are seen as a managerial function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial ties between an organization and the public on which its success or bankruptcy depends. This process takes place in a public space bombarded with messages on both ordinary and novel ways. Creativity in public relations intervenes in the dialogue between the organization and the public with elements of originality, ingenuity, novelty, value, efficiency, meant to highlight the messages emitted (Dilenschneider, R. L. (Ed.), 2022).

Actors who disputed positions in public space are sensitive to creative actions. They help the customer to better position themselves in a dynamic, dense, agitated, overcrowded field. Companies that communicate professionally in public space adopt public relations strategies to help them differentiate, stand out, attract attention. They know that public relations is a field of activity where creativity is visible and immediately judged.

Creativity in public relations is not available for sale at the corner of a street. It is born out of reading, education, imagination, talent, inner freedom, attention, experience, qualification. Creativity makes the difference between a well-done event and a memorable one. People remember the new, eccentric sometimes, which impresses, shock, stimulate, capture the imagination. Creativity makes the message of the organization not being just there, but to seduce. Seduction can have as a vehicle humor, celebrity (usually an endorser), complicity, ingenuity, surprise, etc. (Dilenschneider, R. L. (Ed.), 2022).

1. The need for creativity in PR

PR activities are very diverse and require a lot of skills. The Public Relations Specialist is both the one who thinks of an unprecedented communication strategy as well as the one who documents, plans, monitors, and measures the results. Because of this, there are many people who see in public relations a work made by an organized person than a creative person. So the question is, do we need creativity in public relations or not ?! (Dilenschneider, R. L. (Ed.), 2022)

We have to agree that a good and efficient public relations activity cannot be done unless it is conceived and made by a creative person. Especially in the online environment (Dodd, M. D., Mundy, D., & Heffron, E. R., 2022). And research and planning also require creative spirit. According to DEX, creativity is defined as an ability to create, producing values.

Issue 1/2022

We often ask ourselves whether research in public relations is creative. We started with research, because it is probably the least loved work a public relation specialist has to do. In summary, research involves gathering all data about the company, product, employees, public, market, competition, media and community that a PRist needs in developing a communication strategy (Elgueta-Ruiz, A., & Martínez-Ortiz, J., 2022).

Research, however, also involves flair. The PRist must collect information from the surrounding world, not just from the databases. It has to show the fine observation, the ability to analyze the human nature, to make subtle connections, to have insights that no one has. And this is also a side of creativity. Valuable research means without stereotypes, a view beyond what is put before the eyes and the overlapping of the contours drawn precisely. At the same time, valuable research means finding information beyond the data, not seeing the public as just a demographic statistic, but going beyond it and observing their unobstructed behavior in figures. (Mehmood, K., Jabeen, F., Iftikhar, Y., Yan, M., Khan, A. N., AlNahyan, M. T., ... & Alhammadi, B. A., 2022).

Planning in public relations is associated by most people with an activity that is more about organizational capacity than about creativity. But the big ideas, the brilliant campaigns we see on the specialized sites, are not shining just because someone has chosen the right words, not only through the images they use, but through the strategy behind them, the one that gives them life and set in motion.

The way to link goals with communication media and how to implement it is the one that determines whether or not a public relations campaign is ingenious and whether it will be remarked. The online environment and the pressure to be creative are those that made it very clear that being creative as a public relations specialist is a necessity and not a caprice (Cronin, A. M., & Edwards, L., 2022).

Beyond the traditional aspects, the digital environment has come up with new opportunities to test the creativity of the public relations specialist. And this is because specialists in public relations needs to think about gaming mechanisms, build useful and fun applications, interact with consumers and, more than that, distinguish themselves among millions of voices. He needs to know his audience in detail, anticipate his reactions and be permanently prepared with an articulated message in the sense he formulates as he would like to hear from a friend. Therefore, the online environment is the one that has made it very clear that being creative as a public relations specialist is a necessity and not a caprice. Good creativity is equal to efficiency (Fisher, J., 2022).

And yet, if creativity in public relations is a necessity, then we ask ourselves: Why are not we surrounded by creative campaigns? We rarely see a brilliant campaign made by a freelancer for a small business client (Maiorescu-Murphy, R. D., 2022). But why all this? There are, however, some possible reasons, among which we can recall: 1. *The first of these concerns to budgets.* This one follows the model "we have ideas, but there is little financial resources to put into practice." There is not much to say here. Unfortunately, such things happen, too. But to be creative means to know how to adapt, to do much of it. Because it can. Hard, but it is possible. Especially in the digital environment; 2. *Education that is received in schools, high schools and universities does not stimulate creativity.* The second reason is that public relations creativities are missing. The education that people receive in schools does not stimulate creativity. Thinking out of the box is still punished in many schools, even in some faculties; 3. *The problem of creativity is improperly understood.* On the other hand, the problem of creativity is poorly understood. That trendy creativity. I'm talking here about the pseudo-PR-ists who think that if they take a shimmering hat and put their straps on their pants, they are creative. Or things do not, as we all know. Creativity comes from a lot of work, careful documentation and passion (Zhou, A., & Xu, S., 2022).

2.The importance of creativity in public relations

Public relations work is based on creativity in almost all its approaches. As in other areas of communication, PR success does not have a specific recipe, it is the result of associating appropriate tools at the right time. The various communication campaigns run by a company or brand obviously have as a starting point an applied approach to the company philosophy, but their success depends on the ability of specialists to be creative. (Cronin, A. M., & Edwards, L. , 2022).

As public relations has a rapid spread, public relations specialists have to bring elements of originality, to look for new angles of approach and to prove in each image campaign creativity and professionalism. To attract attention to the company they work for, public relations specialists often turn to events. Some special events target employees and others are external. These events can take the form of picnics, teambuildings, birthday parties, sporting events, "open day", public demonstrations, etc. It takes a lot of ingenuity to surprise the people concerned and for the organized activities to not become anything banal, repetitive. That is why public relations specialists are trying to explore their creativity by using ideas stimulation techniques, such as brainstorming, ideas evaluation, individual creativity, focus group (Tench, R., & Willis, P., 2009).

Issue 1/2022

Of course, documenting and informing about a particular issue, a particular product must pre-empt any creative approach. In public relations, however, everything must have a practical purpose, measurable in image capital or money. That's why creative talent is not appreciated for itself as long as there are no tangible results. This is why some firms avoided hiring highly creative people who might become unprofitable. But other firms have found a more productive solution. They have each person in each team to temper the creative momentum when they move away from the target. The creative power of a team of public relations specialists is reflected, among other things, in the degree of customer satisfaction or the number of clients in the case of public relations firms. Unfortunately, the quality of work is not the only criterion that motivates or discourages people from resorting to services provided by specialists (Tam, L., Kim, J. N., Grunig, J. E., Hall, J. A., & Swerling, J., 2022).

3. Guerrilla public relations - an increasingly appreciated branch

Many companies find the prices of PR firms fairly restrictive and they are forced to give up this kind of service. But the imagination of practitioners has managed to overcome this obstacle. Thus, the guerrilla public relations (PR guerrilla) appeared, an increasingly appreciated branch. The reason why guerrilla public relations is becoming more and more appreciated by both clients and the public is a very simple one. Guerrilla PR means, above all, creativity in public relations. It means applying surprising tactics, with maximum effects and minimal costs. It means sending messages in a clever way, more personal and aggressive than classical practices. In guerrilla public relations the key to success is not to do more and more public relations activities that consume more and more money, but to find ways to establish solid links and trust the audience, using the resources that a company already has (Álvarez, A. M., 2022).

Of course, in public relations, creativity also involves taking a risk because the message of a company may not reach the target audience or be misunderstood. However, it is important to note that public relations specialists must have the courage to free creativity. There is no need for someone to be a magician of the word to use the force of guerrilla creativity. The PR specialist does not have to be an exceptional writer, a perfect artist, a great photographer or a great playwright (Tench, R., & Willis, P., 2009).

Creativity is also important in drafting public relations materials. Even though most of the texts used in the field must strictly follow the editing rules, creativity

does not become redundant. On the contrary, it is all the more difficult to be original, to attract attention when you are restricted by rules and templates. Such conditions require even more the originality and inspiration of the author. The audience does not take into account that the PR specialist have written 100 or 1,000 company-related releases, for public every text is a testimony of the engagement, professionalism and appreciation the PR-ist has for the company he represents (Vollero, A., Yin, J., & Siano, A. (2022).

Therefore, a public relations specialist must always come up with a new and interesting "coat" to embody the same defining message of the company. We also want to mention that a public relations specialist can demonstrate his creativity through the way he builds his own image. It is known that the audience tends to overlap the image of the spokesperson with that of the company. If the person appearing in front of people is a confident, positive, vivacious person, the company will also be perceived as strong, open and communicative, but if the spokesman is refractory, inexpressive and laconic, the public will think the company has something to hide, is outdated and not involved in community issues.

The creativity of public relations specialists is and will be difficult to test for what we call "peace PR". This new and ambitious concept aims to increase the value of peace news to make it more visible in the media at the expense of war. But peace is a very difficult "client", which means that reaching this goal will require a call to creativity to develop awareness and education strategies for the public (Guiora, A., Cotton, A. M., & Sebastião, S. P. , 2022).

This topic is insufficiently explored, probably because of the fear of practitioners not to "mistaken". It is very important to keep in mind that the field of public relations is very generous and that it allows and demands the broad and uncensored manifestation of creativity. We can be sure that whenever campaigns and public relations actions are based on creativity, we will have something surprising, different, funny, something that will stop us, something that will make us want to see what it follows. (Tworzydło, D., Gawroński, S., Opolska-Bieleńska, A., & Lach, M. , 2022).

4.Reasons why innovation is communication in digital economy

Today, companies in all industries need to find new ways to innovate and reinvent themselves to survive in the digital economy. People who run innovation programs at major companies often ask: *What is the most important factor in developing the latest innovations? Is it a great idea or a great deal of funding?*

Issue 1/2022

Inspiration or sweat? Imagination or discipline? Taking risks or following certain processes? Of course, all of the above, but none of the above is the only major factor. Transforming a brilliant concept into a product, solution or service sought with a great impact on the public, requires another vital ingredient, and after decades of experience in developing solutions and in conducting co-innovation programs, PR leaders consider communicating as the most important factor in innovation. Innovation is, in fact, communication (Pinsdorf, M., 2022).

Communication, including rare art of listening, is more necessary than ever in our digital age, as the pace of change accelerates exponentially, technology becomes more complex and the entire industry is disturbed overnight with unforeseen business models (Clark, T., Dodson, S., Guivarra, N., & Hunt, Y. W. , 2022). People listen to respond, rather than understand. However, digitization requires active listening to the ecosystem to survive and develop collaboration strategies with companies, partners and customers around the world.

We totally agree with the viewpoint of journalist and editor *Chris Anderson*, the curator at *TED Talks*, who said that "any significant element of human progress only occurred because people shared ideas with each other and then collaborated to turns these ideas into reality. " Thus, bidirectional communication can mean the difference between success and failure when it comes to innovation. Here's what we're going to say about the three key reasons why innovation today is communication. (Willis, P., & McKie, D., 2011).

First of all, ***inclusion and diversity must be considered***. Today's most innovative organizations recognize that ideas that change the game can come from anywhere and from anyone, encouraging greater diversity and inclusion (Mehmood, K., Jabeen, F., Iftikhar, Y., Yan, M., Khan, A. N., AlNahyan, M. T., ... & Alhammadi, B. A., 2022). In "Why diversity matters," *McKinsey & Company* found that the most diverse ethical companies in their industry had 35% more chances to overcome their colleagues' performance, while those of a wide variety of men and women have only 15% more chances to get better financial benefits. *Cisco's* own research shows that inclusive practices have been the second biggest advantage of IoT innovations, with immediate importance to the quality of the technology infrastructure (Willis, P., & McKie, D., 2011). Greater inclusion places enormous importance on the ability of different organizations and teams to communicate clearly, consistently and with mutual respect. For example, *Cisco* is launching annually an innovation challenge for all its employees (over 74,000 employees), encouraging them to cooperate and co-innovate, form different teams,

take advantage of their own passions and bring their ideas to life (Sebastião, S. P., 2022). If someone tries to become more innovative then communications should support their entire effort from start to finish. Each company has to collaborate with employee communications, human relations, business leaders and top management, including the CEO, to strengthen the importance of employee innovation in the strategic direction of the company. It is essential to improve the key messages sent by executives and others to meetings and events organized by the company in video, articles and presentations (Vuillermin, F., & Huck-Sandhu, S. (2022)

Secondly, it is very important *to create a solid and innovative team*. For example, in *Silicon Valley*, startups are based on almost everyone to contribute with the best to develop true player leaders at the level of working teams. In the big companies, the process tends to be rather bureaucratic, heavier and with some political influences, which hinders communication and open progress. First of all, a creating an (Willis, P., & McKie, D., 2011). team is at least as important as the idea itself. Innovation is more like a team sport with different players than a traditional approach with the help of engineers who have the same beliefs as a result of a rigid learning processes and a narrow perspective of the outside world. Winning innovations come from inter-functional teams that exploit their members' information on marketing, sales, human resources, operational development, engineering, or business development. With the mind open to communication, innovators challenge each other, validate and develop together truly tradable solutions - not scientific experiments. (Joshi, B., 2022) And here we have to agree with *Elon Musk*, the pioneer of innovation, who said that talent is extremely important, like a sports team. The team that has the best individual player will often win, but then there is a multiplier of how these players work together and the strategy they use (Suárez-Monsalve, A. M., 2022). Therefore, companies should invest in a strong communication platform to encourage team innovation. Repeated messages must empower and inspire decision-makers, take risks without fear of being prosecuted or penalized. Guided by HR, any company can communicate through their multimedia channels their innovative attitudes (Rashidovna, A. F., 2022).

And last but not least, *emphasis should be placed on hyper-co-development*. The days of the lonely innovator who work alone at night in a room behind the house or in a garage are long gone. Today, no one can innovate alone because of the complexity of the technology and applications that appear on the market. Today everything is about hyper-co-innovation, where solution providers, customers, partners and even employees learn, collaborate and develop together (Joshi, B.,

Issue 1/2022

2022). Many companies have created innovation centers to present and co-develop solutions with their ecosystems. It is essential for companies to have global and local innovation centers serving as labs and outposts of listening. Here, employees can work with partners to share best practices and failures to develop and, most importantly, market solutions directly on the market. Finally, everyone wins.

We cannot, however, overestimate the importance of listening. Greek philosopher *Diogenes* said that "we have two ears and a tongue, so that we listen more and speak less." *Peter Drucker*, the father of management, also said, "To improve communication, you do not have to communicate with all, but only with the final recipient." In all innovation programs, whether internal or external, good things only happen through listening, understanding and evaluation and other perspectives (Shen, H., & Jiang, H., 2022). Without the power of bidirectional communication, few innovations that improve our lives and livelihood would go beyond an idea.

5. Innovation in PR: Digital Instruments

Innovation in PR is seen as a new method, a new process, a new product, etc. Innovation has been called a basic word in business, but essentially it's nothing but change, and the benefits it brings do not only apply to the product industry. It's a matter that has been debated several times over the last few years - "*What is the future of Public Relations and how do we get there?*" There have been demands for innovation, new ways to think and do things, to keep up with a forward-looking economy in terms of digital technology, staff resources and consumer involvement (Zhou, A., & Xu, S., 2022).

5.1. Innovation in service offer

Demands for innovation in public relations have been requested, partly due to *advancing content marketing or inbound public relations*. Content marketing is simply when media, like blogs, social channels, images, speeches, videos, e-books and so on are used in a cohesive plan to publish content in specific places to target certain audiences and to get a specific result (Joshi, B., 2022)

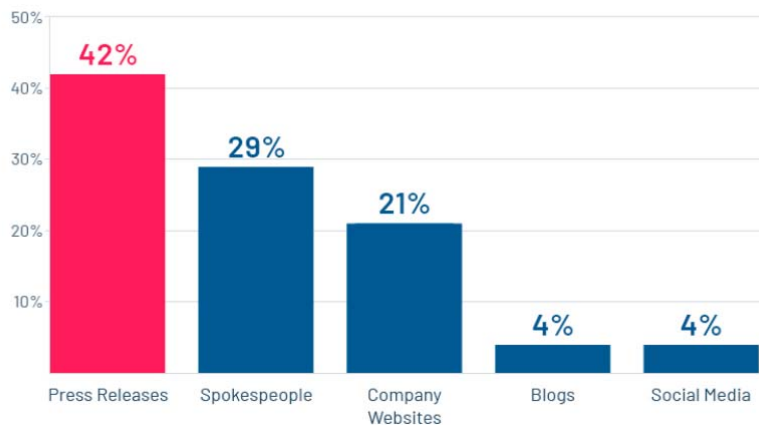
Realistically, this tactic is new only by name. It could be argued that the content marketing industry has been around for over a century. *John Deere's American Farming Company* is often recognized as a pioneer with their publication "*The Furrow*," being first printed in 1895. Whatever the term used, the proactive creation of media opportunities is important. Website optimization and press

releases, meaningful engagement with the public in social media, and increased search engine rankings are just some of the results that PR agencies currently offer as part of their offer services. (Badham, M., & Mykkänen, M., 2022).

The problem for the PR industry - and the great opportunity for the business community - is that the relationship with the media remained their ‘bread and butter’. And the online media landscape is drastically different from the old days of printing information. Journalists do not call on PR officers, and even when they do, they would prefer to talk to business owners or founders anyway.

Finding, staging and building relationships with the media is now available to anyone. With this in mind, digital marketing agencies are moving forward, offering not only content production and media relations, but also more technical and more lucrative online advertising. PR vendors must remain at the forefront of digital tools and abilities to help future customers as well (Zhou, A., & Xu, S., 2022).

The Most Trusted Media Sources in the US



Source: Cision

Top Digital Instrument: As content moves more and more to the visual side, free tools such as **Infogr.am** make it easier for organizations to communicate better, from statistics to stories, in an attractive design format suitable for social and digital channels. Mass media also increasingly incorporates this type of content in

Issue 1/2022

their news coverage, thus reinforcing press releases. Press releases are ranked as the most trustworthy channel for media. People have low trust in news sources in general, and media professionals are no exception. Traditional forms of PR like press releases, however, still stand strong, and with 42%, are ranked as the most trustworthy source by media in the US. They outrank company websites (21%), blogs (4%), social media (4%), and spokespeople (29%). (Source: CISION)

5.2. Innovation in delivering services

The least-favored area of innovation in PR is *the supply of services and pricing models*. Modern PR agencies treat products and services in an outdated fashion, perhaps because they feel comfortable, but do not necessarily match the way modern businesses work. By giving them what they might want, but not necessarily what they need. And here, technology advances the way some PR agencies deliver customer information (Joshi, B., 2022).

Independent subcontractors, 24-hour teams and global network alliances allow even the smallest agencies to do their deliveries worldwide, over continents. Let's take the example of *The PR Network*, from Northern Ireland, using online project management systems, independent professionals and personalized services. The local *Serious PR Agency* has been offering the same approach for a few years (Mairescu-Murphy, R. D., 2022).

Unfortunately, this innovative model is quite unique. For the most part, the industry continues to operate with a generic provider that offers: hourly invoiced personnel costs, setting hours per month with additional bills, unnecessary management levels that only have the task of drinking wine and getting dinner to win new customers. In a modern age of daily social media, with a community less and less able to take initiatives that can do much of the core business, requiring only sporadic top-level strategic advice; this old model of action is outdated, is no longer fit for the original purpose, and virtually does not deserve the investment. For the same reasons, this model will soon become unprofitable (Vuillermin, F., & Huck-Sandhu, S. (2022)

The PR industry will have to look at their colleagues, such as: *FinTech*, *Digital Marketing* and beyond, to find out how well it can use the digital landscape and the various tools and abilities within it if they want to offer a personalized service, adapted to the next generation of companies. Otherwise, they will constantly be accused of over-valuation and under-delivery (Hanlon, A., 2021).

Digital Top Tool: There are many automation tools available to streamline PR processes from social programming software such as *Hootsuite*, *Sprout Social* and

Buffer to tools like *Coverage Book* to save time even for the basic task reporting to customers (Bashirzadeh, Y., Mai, R., & Faure, C., 2022).

5.3. Innovation in the service team

Of course, every company needs more than products and services to offer to their customers. Companies need good people to support their interests. The needs of the modern workforce and the growing skill set needed to produce **high-quality content and technical skills to attract customers**, also require the innovation of the PR industry. PR agencies have a bad reputation when it comes to people's management. From "slavery" internships, accessible only to wealthy students, to the "first-come-last-out" mentality, overworked employees have become mentally fatigued before the age of 30, career development in an in-house job, not being a dream to touch for them (Joshi, B., 2022).

Public relations is an industry that will strive to attract the best writers, digital marketers and data scientists. Even once recruited, a beginner digital specialist does not fit easily into the structures of any project team. Let's add that PR agencies either require candidates to have a digital diploma or look for a lot of skills, from graphic design to advanced PPCs, all wrapped up in an inexperienced graduate so they can pay him very badly. Recruiting, retaining and developing staff can be said to be an area that could certainly benefit from innovative thinking in the future. (Bashirzadeh, Y., Mai, R., & Faure, C., 2022).

Top Digital Instrument: ASANA is one of the many project management and teamwork programs that allow for flexibility across teams. At *UtilityBear.com*, they use it for design, eCommerce, digital marketing and social media, the team being geographically dispersed, so half of staff work outside of the office and out of office hours (Denga, E. M., Vajjhala, N. R., & Rakshit, S., 2022).

5.4. Assess innovation in services

Despite the traditional argument that *PR is "part-art-part-science,"* public relations was predominantly filled with quality writers, qualified communicators, and people with a healthy and innovative way of thinking. There has been and remains a shortage of qualified staff in database analysis. And this is a problem because data analysis has become the foundation of the modern PR campaign (Zakharchenko, A., 2022).

In the most advanced thinking of agencies, digital is now the cornerstone of performance control. We can try to measure the public's feelings, we can even try

Issue 1/2022

to prove awareness raising, but the modern business desires more. Modern businesses want concrete evidence of value. Beyond traditional PR services such as media coverage, modern agencies are still on the way of learning to measure blog rankings, search engine optimization (SEO), technical improvements in areas such as video production, social media measurement, and finding ways to automate as much as possible to free up time for creativity, content production, and long-term campaign planning. With innovative tools, modern PR can try to bridge the gap between outputs and inputs and show the true core value for companies (Mairescu-Murphy, R. D., 2022).

Top Digital Tool: Answer the Client connects to a *Google Analytics* account and makes great things for a PR report. Once online media coverage URLs are entered, the tool binds the traffic source to visitors to the site, generating an instantaneous snapshot of traffic generated by PR coverage, as well as any goal or value of the created transaction.

But all these innovative practices are far from being widespread. Of course, the PR industry is in the process of learning and innovation, but not as fast as the business community deserves and needs. Regardless of the industry in which a company is located, digital technologies enlighten us all with a wide variety of innovations in products, service delivery and processes (Mairescu-Murphy, R. D., 2022).

We know, for example, that innovative companies using these technologies work better and ultimately have more success. Moreover, in the future, lack of innovation can lead to total loss of business models.

6. The future of public relations

The guiding principle of public relations refers to the use of news and content to present a message about anything - a product, a business, an organization, an effort - using any effective means of reaching the audience. Over the years, public relations has taken many forms, depending on the most effective means of communication at a time (Mairescu-Murphy, R. D., 2022)

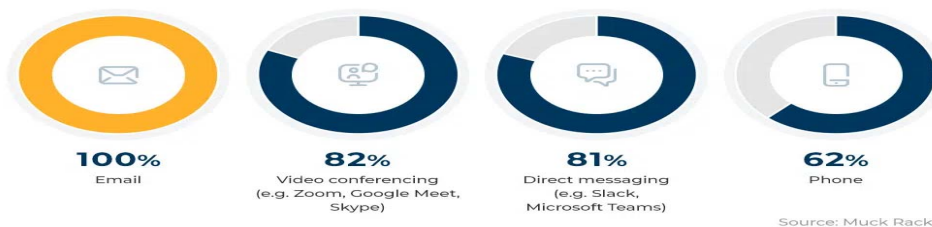
Public relations does not deal with advertising. Public relations tell stories. PR is an image trainer. But with technological advances that turn almost every aspect of communication and interaction, leaving nothing intact, we might ask: "*Is the PR in essence a tool for modeling stories, not advertising, but also an image modeling tool that we have ever known?*" It goes without saying that public relations is still a continuous influence that has managed to withstand the test of time. From our perspective, the law of supply and demand gave the PR a new impetus, with

companies having more and more ambitions to impress and attract customers, with a much more precise focus on building and winning an audience (Zhou, A., & Xu, S., 2022).

There is always a new battle, a new editor, a new editorial calendar, a new PR store etc., which makes PR a very interesting and opportunistic landscape for brand building. To keep up to date, it is essential that PR and communication people always read articles and news from the target market to attract the attention of new publishers, writers, columns of publications, etc., and then take the right step align the requirements and impress the audience. Whenever PR people meet a new writer or publisher, it's a good idea to send an introductory email, even if they have not yet prepared a news story that immediately matches the audience needs of the target audience (Allagui, I., & Breslow, H., 2016).

The most popular communication tool among PR professionals is *email*. Sure, we all expected PR professionals to spend their working hours constantly communicating with others, especially journalists, but who would have expected that all of them spend most of their time using emails? Other commonly used tools among PRs include *direct messaging*, *phone*, and *video conferencing software*, as evidenced by the latest public relations statistics. (Muck Rack)

The Most Popular Communication Tools Among PR Professionals



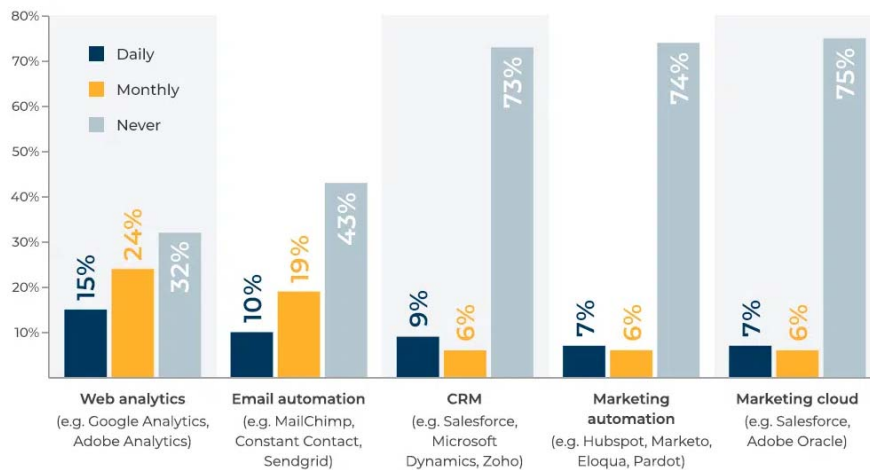
The highest percentage of PR professionals choose *web analytics* as their top marketing tool. On the list of the most popular marketing software are *marketing automation*, *web analytics*, *marketing cloud*, *email automation*, and *CRM software*. Interestingly, about three-quarters of PRs never use marketing clouds, CRM, and marketing automation software. (Muck Rack)

Twitter was voted the best platform for following journalists by over 90% of PR pros. One of the most common forms of PR is finding good journalists and

Issue 1/2022

following them on social media. That's why 54% of PR professionals follow journalists on their social media sites before pitching to them. 91% of them say that Twitter is the best platform to do this. Meanwhile, when it comes to social media platforms for developing communication and social media strategies, PR statistics show *LinkedIn* is the top choice among PR pros. Twitter comes in second, with 77% of PRs voting for this platform. *Instagram*, *Facebook*, and *TikTok* close the top five. (Muck Rack)

The Leading Marketing Solutions Among PR Professionals and Their Usage Frequency



Source: Muck Rack

Industries evolve and PR is no exception. Here are the responses to *Where do you see the focus of the PR profession in the next 2-3 years?*:

Some of these predictions may have been on our radar already while others might come as a surprise.

Here are six trends that are going to define the conversation about PR in the years to come (Prowly, 2021):

- Moving closer towards content regulation on social media
- A greater emphasis on social responsibility & business ethics
- The rise of Artificial Intelligence and data science

- Digital events are the new norm
- Soon, everyone will have a podcast
- Paid exposure is likely to replace earned media.

Business strategy	43%
Purpose-driven initiatives	51%
Digital-only	10%
Artificial Intelligence	7%
Integration with Internal Communications	25%
Reputation management	43%
Crisis management	40%
Change management	32%
Technology proficiency	18%

Source: Ragan Communications, 2020

8. What's going on in PR right now?

While there are many widely used public relations procedures to choose from, 88% of leading PR professionals believe that one of the new PR strategies, **digital storytelling**, is the way to go. They state that digitalization has found its way into just about any sector and that the PR industry is no different. (USC Annenberg)

The Top PR Strategies That Will Shape the Industry's Future

Issue 1/2022

Source: USC Annenberg

Less than 50% of large US companies engage in PR activities. According to Statista's public relations industry analysis, 46% of large US enterprises (with 500+ employees) recognize the importance of public relations and utilize it in their business strategies. Additionally, 19% of them have hired an external agency to do the job for them.(Statista).

The public relations industry growth has been skyrocketing since 2016 when the market was valued at \$14 billion. That number jumped to \$63.8 billion in 2018. According to Statista, the global public relations industry is expected to reach \$93.07 billion next year.(Statista)

The function of *writing a press release* is no longer a priority in PR. As it turns out, writing is one thing, and relevance and attraction is another thing. Now the PR function begins to focus more on *return on investment (ROI)*, so we see two major disciplines that begin to line up: public relations and marketing. In simple terms, it is not just about creating content, but rather about "content marketing" - and today it means a whole world of difference (Watson, T., 2005).

Influencer marketing is an essential PR and marketing tool for 93% of marketers. Influencer marketing is one of the new PR strategies. It consists of a product or service promotion by an influencer who has a significant impact on the decision-making of your target audience. With the rise of digital channels, particularly the importance of social media, this form of marketing has bloomed. Aside from the obvious benefit of reaching your target audience, influencer marketing has excellent ROI. (Marketing Dive)

Then, in public relations, the most important player in the rules of the game is, in our opinion, the Internet of Things (IoT). Even though the Internet has always been involved in PR, the number of users is steadily growing, with more technologies designed, making it more convenient for humanity to access anything online. For public relations, this means one thing: the internet is the largest communication medium and will remain so until the next technological revolution. (Amodu, L., Odiboh, O., Usaini, S., Yartey, D., & Ekanem, T. , 2019).

Over 73% of journalists look for press releases online. This and other similar PR facts stress the importance of digital PR and online outreach (Fehrer, J. A., Baker, J. J., & Carroll, C. E. ,2022). Among other things, online press releases drive organic traffic toward websites, particularly if it relies on keyword optimization. (Isynergy)

Conclusions

Given the current trends, we think it's safe to predict that PR will remain in general lines, steady in the years to come. Inevitably, more emphasis will be placed on online content and less on print. As far as the future of public relations is concerned, in our opinion, we are looking at an increasing number of people heading to the online media as a source of real-time stories and responses. There is and will be a considerable transition from public relations based on journalists / writers to a customer-focused approach.

Public relations has turned over the past years towards a more customer-oriented structure, with consumers playing a more important role in how agencies give their information to the press. We think it is an important factor to consider, and PR business strategies should be changed easily nowadays to reach target customers of content companies that will ultimately create a rapid and beneficial change for the customer, either through the purchase of products or services, or through impressions, etc. It is important now that PR specialists of companies to focus more on what the writer / journalist wants to write, but most important on what the consumer hopes to read.

Public relations refers to stories and, as people and activities evolve, so will the stories. Today, people spend more time surfing online than reading a book, and when they read online, only 28% of the words are likely to be retained. To optimize their attention, the more condensed is the content, the better.

For public relations, the direction is now directed to visual content - infographic, GIF content, and short videos that can be shared. From our perspective, the public of the future will require short, condensed, appealing and visible content from a company's PR specialists. As a PR agency, careful planning and brainstorming of visual content are essential.

PR-ists must be careful to keep what is current and potentially viral to attract the audience. In view of these realities, we also add that statistics show that the largest population of Internet users is made up of people aged between 18 and 49, most of whom are millennial. So, we are talking about a growing population in the world, people tired of old public relations tactics. Do you think they read longer articles? Do you think they're watching commercials? What kinds of influences do you think that determines their purchasing decisions now? To answer these questions, the future of PR will pay more attention to future analysis processes.

Any organization that does not take into account the power of analysis capacity will be clearly disadvantaged compared to the rest. However, the good news is that

Issue 1/2022

we can now identify a number of reliable analytical tools for market-testing. Compared to printed matter, it's easier to measure ROI for any PR article published online, with more sophisticated tracking tools at hand.

Public relations is and will remain the story and construction of the images, which will remain a constant. In the following years, in the PR vocabulary, we will probably hear terms such as "data techniques", "data analysis" and "geo-location" added to existing PR terms. Companies must be armed with statistical data as the basis for reliable and influential stories to rise above the competition.

References

- [1] Allagui, I., & Breslow, H. (2016). Social media for public relations: Lessons from four effective cases. *Public relations review*, 42(1), 20-30.
- [2] Álvarez, A. M. (2022). Guerrillas and Social Movements. The Supportive Environment of the Salvadoran Armed Left During the Seventies. *Partecipazione e conflitto*, 15(1), 175-192.
- [3] Amodu, L., Odiboh, O., Usaini, S., Yartey, D., & Ekanem, T. (2019). Data on security implications of the adoption of Internet of Things by public relations professionals. *Data in brief*, 27, 104663.
- [4] Badham, M., & Mykkänen, M. (2022). A relational approach to how media engages with their audiences in social media. *Media and Communication*, 10(1).
- [5] Bashirzadeh, Y., Mai, R., & Faure, C. (2022). How rich is too rich? Visual design elements in digital marketing communications. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 39(1), 58-76.
- [6] Clark, T., Dodson, S., Guivarra, N., & Hunt, Y. W. (2022). "I want to create change; I want to create impact": Personal-activism narratives of Indigenous Australian women working in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 48(1), 102135.
- [7] Cronin, A. M., & Edwards, L. (2022). Resituating the political in cultural intermediary work: Charity sector public relations and communication. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 25(1), 148-165.
- [8] Denga, E. M., Vajjhala, N. R., & Rakshit, S. (2022). The Role of Digital Marketing in Achieving Sustainable Competitive Advantage. *Digital Transformation and Internationalization Strategies in Organizations*, 44-60.
- [9] Dilenschneider, R. L. (Ed.). (2022). *The Public Relations Handbook*. BenBella Books.
- [10] Dodd, M. D., Mundy, D., & Heffron, E. R. (2022). 5 ONLINE ACTIVISM AND A CONCEPTUAL TYPOLOGY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVIST ROLES. *Social Media and Crisis Communication*, 60-70.

- [11] Elgueta-Ruiz, A., & Martínez-Ortiz, J. (2022). Public relations in the new millennium: Towards a synoptic view of fifteen years of research in Public Relations Review in the 21st century (2000–2014). *Public Relations Review*, 48(2), 102175.
- [12] Fehrer, J. A., Baker, J. J., & Carroll, C. E. (2022). The role of public relations in shaping service ecosystems for social change. *Journal of Service Management*.
- [13] Fisher, J. (2022). Serious games as strategic communication tools: an analytic framework for the study of digital games in public relations research. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 1-16.
- [14] Guiora, A., Cotton, A. M., & Sebastião, S. P. (2022). Public Diplomats and Public Relations Practitioners: Similar Functions but Distinct Professional Status and Recognition? In *Diplomacy, Organisations and Citizens* (pp. 101-124). Springer, Cham.
- [15] Hanlon, A. (2021). *Digital marketing: strategic planning & integration*. Sage.
- [16] Joshi, B. (2022). Building “foundational” linkages between development communication and public relations: A collaborative communication approach to development. *Public Relations Review*, 48(1), 102140.
- [17] Miorescu-Murphy, R. D. (2022). Business-centered versus socially responsible corporate diversity communication. An assessment of stakeholder (dis) agreement on Twitter. *Public Relations Review*, 48(1), 102138.
- [18] Mehmood, K., Jabeen, F., Iftikhar, Y., Yan, M., Khan, A. N., AlNahyan, M. T., ... & Alhammedi, B. A. (2022). Elucidating the effects of organisational practices on innovative work behavior in UAE public sector organisations: The mediating role of employees’ wellbeing. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*.
- [19] Pinsdorf, M. (2022). *Communicating when your company is under siege*. Fordham University Press.
- [20] Rashidovna, A. F. (2022). PR (Public Relations) Technologies in the Development of Domestic Tourism in the Example of Uzbekistan. *CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF INNOVATIONS ON TOURISM MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE*, 3(1), 1-4.
- [21] Sebastião, S. P. (2022). Becoming an Ethical Ambassador: Proposal for a Public Relations and Public Diplomacy Practitioner Course on Ethics. In *Diplomacy, Organisations and Citizens* (pp. 275-289). Springer, Cham.
- [22] Shen, H., & Jiang, H. (2022). Rethinking internal public relations: organizations and publics as community members. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 1-14.
- [23] Suárez-Monsalve, A. M. (2022). Evolution of the public relations profession in Latin America: A brief review of the development of public relations in Latin American countries. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 2046147X221081175.
- [24] Tam, L., Kim, J. N., Grunig, J. E., Hall, J. A., & Swerling, J. (2022). In search of communication excellence: Public relations’ value, empowerment, and structure in strategic management. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 28(2), 183-206.
- [25] Tench, R., & Willis, P. (2009). Creativity, deception and ethical malpractice: A critique of the Trumanisation of marketing public relations through guerrilla

Issue 1/2022

- campaigns. *Ethical Space: The international Journal of Communication Ethics*, 6(2), 47-55.
- [26] Tworzydło, D., Gawroński, S., Opolska-Bieleńska, A., & Lach, M. (2022). Changes in the demand for CSR activities and stakeholder engagement based on research conducted among public relations specialists in Poland, with consideration of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 29(1), 135-145.
- [27] Vollero, A., Yin, J., & Siano, A. (2022). Convergence or divergence? A comparative analysis of CSR communication by leading firms in Asia, Europe, and North America. *Public Relations Review*, 48(1), 102142.
- [28] Vuillermin, F., & Huck-Sandhu, S. (2022). Strategic Planning in Dynamic Environments: How Design Thinking Can Complement Corporate Communication. *Journal of Design Thinking*.
- [29] Watson, T. (2005). Towards common nomenclature for public relations evaluation: does Return on Investment (ROI) have a central role? In *12th International Public Relations Research Symposium*. www.bledcom.com.
- [30] Willis, P., & McKie, D. (2011). Outsourcing public relations pedagogy: Lessons from innovation, management futures, and stakeholder participation. *Public Relations Review*, 37(5), 466-469.
- [31] Zakharchenko, A. (2022). PR-Message Analysis as a New Method for the Quantitative and Qualitative Communication Campaign Study. *Information & Media*, 93, 42-61.
- [32] Zhou, A., & Xu, S. (2022). Digital public relations through the lens of affordances: a conceptual expansion of the dialogic principles. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 1-19.