

PUBLIC RELATIONS IN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD

GLOBAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

Global Public relations is called international public relations, is the planned organized efforts of a company or institution or a government to establish and build relations with the publics of other nations.

PUBLIC RELATIONS IN
INTERDEPENDENT WORLD

New Age Global Marketing

Today almost one-third of US corporate profits are generated through international business.

Coca-Colas international sales account for 70% of their revenue.

Language and cultural differences

International PR Challenges Differences in language laws and culture pose serious problems for international public relations

EXAMPLES

- Americans are fond of using first names, but it's not proper business etiquette to do so in Europe and Asia unless you have been given permission.
- Americans should avoid using expressions such as “full-court press” or even “awesome” or “cool” since many foreigners will have no idea what you are talking about.
- In the United Kingdom, the word *scheme* refers to a business proposition and holds no connotation of deceit as it does in the United States.
- Early morning breakfast meetings are not conducted in Latin America; by the same token, a dinner meeting may not start until 9 or 10 P.M.
- In Thailand and other Asian cultures, it's inappropriate to criticize an employee in front of others because the employee will “lose face.” Also, it's a crime in Thailand to make disrespectful remarks about the royal family, particularly the king.
- In Latin America, greetings often include physical contact such as hugging the other person or grabbing him or her by the arm. Men and women commonly greet each other with a kiss on the cheek in Argentina and Chile.
- News releases in Malaysia should be distributed in the four official languages to avoid alienating any segment of the press.
- Gift giving is common in Asian cultures. Executives, meeting for the first time, will exchange gifts as a way of building a social relationship.
- In Muslim nations, particularly the Middle East, men should not stand near, touch, or stare at any woman.

A MULTICULTURAL WORLD

Reaching Out to the Muslim World

Islam is the world's second largest religion after Christianity and is increasingly being recognized as a major consumer market. The demographics are quite impressive. The global Muslim population is expected to increase 35 percent over the next 20 years from 1.6 billion today to 2.2 billion by 2030.

The public relations and marketing challenge, however, is how to effectively reach such a diverse group in terms of geography and culture. In terms of geography, 60 percent of the Muslim population lives in the Asia/Pacific region with Indonesia's 235 million Muslim constituting the largest percentage. Only 20 percent live in the Middle East and North Africa, while the remaining 20 percent are

located in various communities throughout Europe and the Americas.

The cultural background is also diverse. Yusuf Hatia, senior VP of Fleishman-Hillard in Mumbai, India, writes, "Muslims live in every country, represent every race and come from every social and economic class." And although they share common religious beliefs, he says they have their own local practices and national culture.

Despite the geographical and cultural diversity, Muslims around the world have one thing in common—the consumption of Halal products. The Halal food market, for example, is about 17 percent of the global food industry and worth about \$650 billion annually. In addition, the Halal pharmaceutical market is worth

about \$500 billion while the Halal cosmetics market is estimated to be a \$13 billion industry. As a result, more companies than ever are producing Halal products and making a special effort to include Muslims in their overall public relations and marketing strategies.

Hatia writes, "For brands that find ways to enhance and engage the Muslim consumer, the rewards are rich. And smart, compelling communications will play a critical role in targeting a consumer market that already represents nearly a quarter of humanity."

Source: Hatia, Y. (2013, June). Muslim world woefully underserved by PR sector. O'Dwyer's Public Relations Report, 14.

Traveling Abroad? How to Make a Good Impression

Business for Diplomatic Action Inc., a nonprofit organization, works with U.S. companies to improve the reputation of the United States around the world. To that end, it has compiled guidelines on how business travelers (as well as tourists) should behave abroad. Here are some tips from its brochure “World Citizens Guide”:

Read a map. Familiarize yourself with the local geography to avoid making insulting mistakes. Knowledge of current events and public issues is a real plus.

Dress up. In some countries, casual dress is a sign of disrespect.

Talk small. Talking about wealth, power, or status—corporate or personal—can create resentment. Bragging about America’s greatness is a real turnoff.

No slang. Even casual profanity is unacceptable.

Slow down. Americans talk fast, eat fast, move fast, and live fast. Many other cultures do not.

Listen as much as you talk. Ask people you’re visiting about themselves and their way of life.

Speak lower and slower. A loud voice is often perceived as bragging.

Exercise religious restraint. In many countries, religion is not a subject for discussion.

Exercise political restraint. Steer clear . . . if someone is attacking U.S. politicians or policies. Agree to disagree.

Learn some words. Learning some simple phrases in the host country’s language is most appreciated.

Reasons Countries hire American Public Relations Professionals

- To hold off protectionist moves threatening their company or industry
- To defeat legislation affecting the sale of a client's product
- To support expansion of the clients markets in the united states
- To provide ongoing information on political sociological and commercial developments in the US

- A great deal of public relations work for companies and governments involves lobbying a nation's elected officials or government agencies for favorable trade agreements.
- Nations also use global public relations to enhance their global image and gain influence in various regional and international groups.
- NGOs are now major players in setting the agenda for discussion of global issues and influencing the policies of corporations and governments.

- NGOs are widely believed to be more credible by the news media and the public on issues such as labor, health, and the environment, partly because they are perceived as lacking the self-interest ascribed to governments and corporations.
- There is increasing evidence that giant corporations are adopting a more accommodative stance and cooperating with activist NGOs to form more socially responsible policies.

Public Relations by Government

The government of every country virtually have multiple departments involved in communicating with political leaders and citizens in other nations.

- Billion dollars are spent to attract visitors for the promotion of tourism.
- US Firms working for Foreign Governments Hill and Knowlton has represented Indonesia and Morocco to promote tourism, create favourable public opinion and influence US foreign policy.

Why countries are engaged in PR?

The Countries are engaged in Public relations for the following reasons

- Advance Political Objectives
- Assess the United States to project action by an country
- To advance the country's commercial interests
- Assist in communications in English
- Win understanding and support on a specific issue undermining the country's standing in the US and the world community
- Modify laws and regulations inhibiting the clients activities in the US

SOCIAL MEDIA IN ACTION

Wars and Conflict: Governments Enlist Social Media as a Weapon

President Assad of Syria in mid-2013 was in the middle of a civil war, which has claimed more than 100,000 lives, but you would never know it if you accessed his Facebook page, Twitter account, or the government's account with Instagram.

The photo sharing site, Instagram, is a particular favorite. Assad's staff posts numerous photos of him and his glamorous wife surrounded by adoring crowds. According to Zeina Karam of Associated Press (AP), "The photos

The sophisticated PR campaign is striking for an isolated leader who has earned near pariah status for his military's bloody crackdown on dissent.

Zeina Karam, reporter for AP

show a smiling Assad among supporters, or grimly visiting wounded Syrians in the hospital. He is seen working in his office in Damascus, an Apple computer and iPad on his desk. His wife, Asma, who has stayed largely out of sight throughout the conflict, features heavily in the photos, casually dressed and surrounded by Syrian children and their mothers."

The Assad regime also has a YouTube channel for posting videos of alleged atrocities by the rebels against his regime, but the Free Syrian Army also uses YouTube and other social media to post videos of alleged atrocities by the Syrian military. In a conflict where there are no foreign journalists on the ground, such videos become the staple of nightly news throughout the world. The rebels also arrange Skype interviews with journalists outside the country and have even hired

a New York public relations firm to represent them.

Erik Sass, in a posting on www.mediapost.com, comments "The days when the horrors of war could be filtered by newspaper editors and TV news producers are over, thanks in large part to social media, which allows users to post and share raw, uncensored photos and video footage of violent conflict, including the terrible consequences for civilians. This development has opened up a whole new arena in the battle to shape public opinion, leading to tit-for-tat social media exchanges between combatants."

The Israeli-Palestine conflict, for example, is now fought in social media. Hamas distributed a video of a father carrying his 11-month-old son killed by an Israeli artillery shell. Not to be outdone, the Israeli government countered with a picture of an Israeli baby, covered in blood, who was wounded by a Hamas rocket attack.

INSIGHTS

A CNN Report on Kazakhstan: News or Propaganda?

Americans don't know much about the central Asian nation of Kazakhstan so CNN produced a special report about this oil and resource-rich nation sandwiched between Russia and China. "Eyes on Kazakhstan" was a half-hour collection of nine short segments that focused on the country's booming energy industry, opportunities for foreign investors, and the modern capital city.

But the series was not exactly what it seemed. It was sponsored by several state-owned agencies, but the reports only made a vague reference about "sponsorship originating from the countries we profile." Online clips did mention that the series was made in "association" with Samruk-Kazyna and the Astana Economic Forum. Research by Max Fisher of Atlantic Magazine, however, found that both of these organizations were part of a state-run holding company with strong ties to the current government.

Fisher also found that the CNN reporter calling Kazakhstan a "strong and vibrant economy" conducted an interview with a man introduced only as an "energy expert" that had effusive praise for the government's management of the economy. What the viewers were not told, however, was that the "expert" was a government employee and head of the Eurasian Economic Club of Scientists'



Association headed by the president of Kazakhstan. In another segment, an "economist" was interviewed about sending talented students abroad for study, but it was also not disclosed that he headed an entire department of the president's office. This, says Fisher, is like CNN interviewing an executive of the Ford Motor as an unbiased "auto expert" who might give comment on the merits of Ford's cars and trucks.

In sum, the CNN series was the result of Kazakhstan making a major investment in lobbying and public relations to combat unfavorable media coverage about its human rights record, the dictatorship of the country's president (in office for more than 20 years), and attract foreign investment for a rapidly growing economy.

Arranging "sponsorship" of the CNN series by government controlled organizations no doubt was considered a major accomplishment.

Fisher writes, "Whether CNN chose to label present and former government employees as unbiased 'experts' without noting their connections or was simply unaware of those links, it's an odd moment of convergence between one of the largest news networks in the world and the lobbying campaign of this far-flung Central Asian oil exporter."

Source: Fisher, M. (2012, July 20). CNN's Effusive Coverage of Kazakhstan [is Quietly Sponsored by Its Subject]. Retrieved from Atlantic Monthly (www.theatlantic.com/International).

Toughest Problems Firms Can Face

- Deciding to represent a country such as Zimbabwe or China whose human rights violations may reflect adversely on the agency
- Persuading the heads of such a nation to alter some of its practices so that the favourable public image sought may reflect reality
- Convincing officials of a client country which may totally control the flow of news internally that the American press is independent from the government control and that they should never expect coverage that is 100 percent favourable
- Deciding whether to represent a nation such as Belarus in which the autocratic head of state has drastically reduced civil liberties and crushed any opposition

Some of the toughest problems confronting public relations firms who work for foreign governments include:

- Deciding whether to represent a country, such as Belarus or Zimbabwe, whose human rights violations may reflect adversely on the agency itself
- Deciding whether to represent nations such as Ecuador, Bolivia, or Venezuela whose governments are extremely critical of U.S. Latin American policies.
- Persuading the governments of such nations to alter some of their practices so that the favorable public image sought will reflect reality
- Convincing a client nation that controls or owns its media that the American press is independent of government influence and coverage won't always be favorable.

China's Educational Outreach to the World

Countries use a variety of “public diplomacy” initiatives to enhance their national reputation and influence opinion leaders in other nations. One such initiative is an extensive program by China to establish Confucius Institutes at universities around the world.

Hanban, an agency affiliated with China's Ministry of Education, was started in 2004 for the purpose of “enhancing the world's understanding of Chinese language and culture, deepening the friendship between China and the rest of the world, and promoting global cultural diversity.” By 2009, Hanban had established and funded almost 350 Confucius Institutes in more than 80 nations and regions around the world.

A sampling of American universities with Institutes includes the University of Tulsa, the University of Florida, Northwestern University, Stanford University, Texas A&M



University, and the University of Minnesota. Confucius Institutes on such campuses provide instruction on Chinese culture and language by providing teachers, partnering with various university academic departments, and donating instructional resources.

The number and distribution of teaching resources to schools is impressive. According to a recent annual report by Hanban, (1) 1.3 million volumes of teaching materials were donated to more than a thousand institutions in 100

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nations, (2) 2,000 teachers and volunteers were sent to 109 nations to teach Chinese, (3) 16,512 secondary school teachers from 47 nations received language training, and (4) *Everyday Chinese* is published in 38 languages.

Hanban also has an extensive international exchange program. More than 800 primary and secondary school principals, for example,

visited China in a recent year. In addition, 800 foreign high school students visited China and participated in “Chinese Bridge” summer camps. University students also receive funding to visit China and learn about Chinese culture and language. The government also has an extensive scholarship program for foreign students to study at Chinese universities.

The Chinese government believes the rapid acceptance of Confucius Institutes is evidence of a global desire to build positive relationships through communication and cooperation. Additionally, the government suggests that the Institutes help China interact with the world in hopes to building mutually beneficial relationships.

Public Diplomacy

The US government refers to its international information efforts as public diplomacy, which involves activities to enhance understanding of American culture and promote US foreign policy objectives. The VOA radio broadcasts are part of this program.

Opportunities in International Work

- As global marketing and communications have expanded in recent years, so too have opportunities for international public relations works.
- Fluency in a foreign language is a valued skill but not a prerequisite; also important is a background in international relations, global marketing techniques, social and economic geography, and cross cultural communication