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Leveraging Business through Public Relations

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Abstract

Public relations (PR) play an important strategic role in a company, facilitating smooth operations by developing favorable connections with stakeholders. It supports other promotional tactics such as advertising and marketing, but its primary goal is to establish and maintain a positive public image and company identity. PR communicates with varied audiences using a variety of techniques. The introduction of new Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) has broadened PR's reach, making it more successful in the global economy. Public relations (PR) assist businesses in managing their reputation, brand image, and customer relations by utilizing resources. It is critical to the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, fostering community participation and ethical practices. In this view, the chapter emphasizes PR tools and highlight the concepts such as corporate image, corporate identity, and corporate reputation. The pioneer study explores the role of public relations and importance of corporate social responsibility. It

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also sheds light on harnessing new electronic media and ICTs. This chapter concludes that, public relations is more than simply a crisis management tool; it is a holistic strategy for cultivating long-lasting partnerships and assuring a company's long-term success.

Keywords: *Corporate Identity, Corporate Reputation, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), Public Relations (PR), Stakeholders.*

Introduction

Public relations, lobbying, publicity, marketing, direct sales, advertising are all tools which help in the promotion of business. Public relations may not directly increase sales but it augments in creating a positive environment for a company. It helps in initiating, maintaining and building sustained relationships with the different stake holders of a business. In the entire business ecosystem public relations is a strategic function that helps in the smooth and positive functioning of the business. It is the only instrument during a crisis to which the management looks forward to resolving an emergency situation. In any type of business, communication is important, and when communications are intended for the purpose of building relations, it is called public relations communications.

According to Phillip Kotler public relations is the 5th “P” of the marketing strategy, while the other 4 “P”s include the Product, Price, Promotion, and place.

According to the doyen of public relations, C.V. Narasimha Reddi “it plays the role of an Advocate, Analyst, Advisor, and Antenna”. These roles help the company in comprehensively understanding the business environment and gearing up for any challenges.

The definition of Public Relations by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations London explains the strategic importance comprehensively according to it “Public relations is a planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics.”

From the definition, it can be seen that public relations are a planned and sustained activity directed towards different publics of a business in order to cultivate a positive image and identity for the company. The role of public relations is to

1. To Create a positive image of a company.
2. Advocate a line of thinking of a company and win people's trust, belief, and support so that their support is always there for the progress of the company.
3. Earn a positive image for the company
4. Create a good corporate identity.
5. Help in Corporate Social Responsibility

To achieve the above-mentioned goals and develop a positive image for the company for a sustained period Public Relations needs to use certain tools and they are as follows:

- 1. Brochure:** It is mainly used in advertising to describe a product or service. They are colorful and stay longer in the

minds of the consumer due to their attractive layout and design. The messages are displayed in a different font to draw the attention of the potential consumer and to stay in his mind for a long time.

When the message to be conveyed must last longer in the minds of the audience, a multi-page publication may not be sufficient; hence, a brochure is an ideal tool to serve the purpose. Sometimes they are called leaflets, folders, or pamphlets based on their size. All these publications are called brochures.

2. Exhibitions: It is a place where products, services or art work are displayed by businesses and consumers can get a first-hand experience of seeing the product or service for themselves. It consists of a display of products, services and artworks.

3. Press Releases: It is a communication tool used by companies to give important news to media houses so that they can use it to inform their readers. A press release is written in a brief and simple way, keeping in mind the importance of space and time for the newspapers. It should attract the attention of readers and, at the same time, communicate the message efficiently. When a company introduces a new product or service or when a new CEO takes over a company, it is important news, and a press release goes a long way in publicizing the news.

4. New Letter: It is a printed publication for a specific public and focuses on information that is important to them for

their use. The content is informal and written keeping in mind the needs of the reader. It is produced at regular intervals.

- 5. Hoardings:** They are huge painted or electronic boards displaying messages that are attractive to draw the attention of the viewers. They are used for outdoor advertising campaigns. Usually, they are placed in places where there is high footfall or public traffic.
- 6. Posters:** It is generally a piece of printed material designed in such a way that it can be pasted on a wall or any vertical surface and contains graphics and text. They are used for giving information about an event, product, or service, etc.
- 7. Websites:** It's an address on the internet where one can post information about their business. We can also post topics of our interest. We can post our opinions or ideas and connect with others, and it's an ideal way for businesses to promote their products and get feedback.
- 8. Celebrity Endorsements:** In this kind of public relations, a celebrity endorses a brand or service to promote its authenticity and quality. They are called the brand ambassadors of that product or service. It is a way of creating trust in the minds of the public so that they feel assured of the product's quality and standard.
- 9. Open House:** It's a day when any visitor is allowed to visit an organization and see for themselves what the company is all about. On that particular day, both the internal and

external public can visit the company. It includes all the stakeholders associated with the company. It is an ideal way to expose the company's vision, mission, services, and products and to showcase the company's corporate culture to the public. This is conducted to increase the positive image of the company.

10.Speech: A speech is a form of group communication and helps in directly communicating with the audience. It's a two-way communication because it gets immediate feedback. It is more believable since the speaker is live and talking to the audience directly. It allows the audience to ask questions and get answers. A CEO giving a speech during an Annual General meeting or the Prime Minister's "Mann ki Baat" is a good example of speech as a public relations tool.

11.Interviews: In this, the interviewee gets the opportunity to express his opinions and views and also express his ideas to the interviewer and, in turn, to the audience. This is a public relations tool where the viewers or readers can directly listen to or read what the interviewer expresses and get clarity on different issues.

12.Institutional Advertising is undertaken by companies in order to increase their corporate image. It is a promotional activity to gather positive images about the company. Some companies advertise to showcase they are giving back to society/community. It is not intended to sell a product or service but rather improve brand image.

Review of Literature

Jing Wun Lee (2022) in the “**Journal of Digital Marketing and Communication**” with the paper titled, “**Impacts of Public Relations on Corporate Reputation**” stated the significance of public relations (PR) in managing corporate reputation and investigated how successful PR tactics support companies in upholding a favorable reputation, which is essential for long-term success. The article highlighted the benefits of a positive corporate reputation, such as (i) acquiring favorable media attention for the organization (ii) more stakeholders, including potential suppliers and employees, will be attracted (iii) acquiring more devoted customers. The article stated that in order to maintain their reputation, organizations need to be able to interact with stakeholders in an efficient manner and have a transparent crisis management plan. The article highlighted that building and sustaining these connections is crucial for public relations professionals, who use their communication skills to improve a company's image. The article concluded that, it is vital for firms to identify and comprehend their key stakeholders, as well as employ effective communication tactics, in order to maintain a positive reputation.

Corporate Image

An image is a representation of the external form of a person or thing; in Latin, it means to imitate. It is the impression or feeling that the world has about a person or company. An image is important for a business to grow and expand; it is how the general public perceives it that can decide its

existence. It is here that public relations can help in building a positive image about a business with its soft approach inside and outside the company.

Globalization has brought in new challenges for businesses. With the advent of the new information and communication technologies, advertising and marketing have become easy, and companies have realized the market potential of their products and are thinking of collaborations. Another important development is the start-up ecosystem, which is thriving in the Indian business scenario.

Think global act local slogan gained importance, and companies are not only accessing the local markets but also the global clients. While globalization has helped the companies in accessing the hitherto unknown segments of the markets, it also has opened up challenges in terms of building brand value and brand image. Brand image and brand identity are important aspects for collaborations from foreign investments and tie-ups. Public relations help to create the requisite brand image, which will help companies attract the attention of global and local companies to collaborate. A good brand image acts like a catalyst to hasten the process of collaborations. The internal public of a company will be aware of the positive environment existing inside a company, but it is the external public that needs to be made aware of the company and how much it is giving back to society in terms of community relations and corporate social responsibility. Hence, it is through corporate public relations that companies should build corporate image.

A good corporate image is possible only if the company has a holistic approach based on a good vision and mission. Another important aspect that helps in building a good corporate image is the quality of the products and services, which is a reflection of the company's long-term vision. A corporate image-building activity should be a long-term exercise, and it should be built into the public relations objective, which is deliberate and sustained. While public relations follow a soft approach, it is also persuasive and hence can help in building a positive image with its various tools.

Corporate Identity

It is the visual symbol of a company through which the company is identified. While an image is the perception of the company in the minds of the public, corporate identity and image complement each other and are both important for the promotion of a company's products and services. It is the visual symbol of a company that stays in the minds of the consumers during their purchase. No amount of advertising budgets will help to sell a product if the corporate image and identity are negative. A company's identity needs to be built through sustained periods of time, keeping in mind its vision and mission.

Corporate Reputation

A reputation is the overall quality or character as seen or judged by people in general, the beliefs and opinions that are held about someone or something. According to Edelman, "it

is collective representation of an organization's past performance that describes the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders. It can make or break a company. A good corporate reputation will improve the relationships of a company with all the publics and, in turn, help in building long-term relationships with both the external and internal public. At the same time, a bad reputation can not only damage the existence of a company but can also impact the future prospects of the company. A good corporate reputation can be sustained with the help of a good public relations program that strives for long term positive outcomes.

Corporate Social Responsibility

According to the book *Effective Public Relations and Media Strategy* by C.V. Narsimha Reddi, corporate social responsibility can be described as “the process by which a corporation participates in the welfare of both internal and external communities, enhancing its environment and well-being to the advantages of the organization and the community concerned.”

CSR activities can include sponsorship of socially beneficial events like sports, donations and charities to schools or voluntary organizations, donating equipment, conducting health camps, building classrooms or washrooms in government schools, etc. Its aim is to initiate and build long term relationships with the different publics for a symbiotic relationship. Public relations with its sustained and deliberate efforts not only helps in bringing about a mutual understanding but also in building a long-term positive

relationship, thereby supporting the CSR initiatives of a company. By supporting the CSR activities of a company, public relations helps in the sustainability of businesses since the support of different publics like the community, government, press, and customers is essential for its long-term existence in the market.

Corporate social responsibility helps in enhancing the positive image of a company through its community participation, and public relations supports CSR with its campaigns and communication through various media. CSR activities can include social activities intended for the benefit of the society or community, but it is PR tools and communication that help in creating awareness about the initiatives.

CSR and PR together can strengthen the positive image of the company for its long-term sustainability and stability in the age of globalization. According to C.V. Narsimha Reddi, "Public relations, which is based on the principle of public interest and social purpose, gains added importance to help the corporate world do the right thing." The role of PR in the CSR activities is to report to the community what good the company has done for the community. This will result in building a good understanding and reputation for the company for its long-term sustainability and enhance business opportunities.

Harnessing New Electronic media and ICTs

The world is now a global village due to the information revolution, and the advent of new Information

Communication Technologies has further shrunk the world. It's now easy for businesses to develop into global conglomerates through the use of ICTs.

But globalization has brought about its own challenges for companies in building corporate reputations, images, and identities. But through proper communication strategies and use of public relations tools, companies have been able to build long-term positive reputations and are able to sustain them for longer periods of time.

In this globalized world, Public Relations is a key phrase in building positive corporate relationships. It has adapted itself well to the demands of the new corporate culture by utilizing the new ICTs effectively. Public relations have a tool of communication and has effectively used information technology to reach all the segments of business and influence them to follow a line of thinking as advocated by the businesses. The ICTs have become the new mass media and have offered new avenues for the spread of targeted messages.

The new mass media include

1. Internet
2. E-mail
3. Website
4. Blogs
5. Twitter (X)
6. Podcast
7. Video news releases
8. Face book
9. Instagram

Public Relations practitioners can utilize these new age media tools in order to reach out to the different publics to communicate targeted messages. These new ICTs act like magic multipliers to deliver the messages instantly and to communicate the messages effectively.

1. Internet: Internet allows companies to post about their products and services to millions of potential customers at no cost in a relatively quick time. They can post content which is relevant to the consumers. The consumers can know the details about the company, its products and services sitting at home and this helps them to make informed decisions. The internet is an important PR tool it helps in communicating to the world about the company and during a crisis situation helps to communicate with people as a help line by giving valuable information to the relevant public.

By constantly communicating with the public through the internet Public Relations can help in the image building activities which are crucial for the long-term sustenance of the business. It is a new age mass media which is effective and efficient at no cost. It is a 24/7 communication channel and hence time is not a barrier. Since it is an interactive the audience has the facility to give instant feedback which is crucial for the reviewing and for course correction.

Another important point is it is accessible to everyone, it is a communication tool to reach the global audience.

2. E-mail: The world has progressed from snail mail to instant mail, which is the E-mail. Communication is important to bring about a mutual understanding between the various publics of a company. E-mails are an instant mail facility to communicate with the targeted internal and external facility. They can be used to communicate personalized mail or group mail; this helps in sending different mails to different sets of people at the same time. Companies can use this facility for their marketing efforts and also for public relations communication. They can use emails to develop good customer relationships and improve business in the long term. This helps companies sustain for a long time in their area of business. Emails also provide good two-way communication and enable instant feedback, which helps in reviewing certain policies and taking corrective measures, which is crucial for the brand image.

3. Website: They are a reflection of a company's image. Based on the website, consumers make an impression about a company. Web sites are given priority by companies because consumers first check the websites and then check out the products and services. How a consumer perceives a company is based on the layout of the website and the information presented on it. Updating the website and the information will go a long way in developing a good image about the company.

It is a major communication platform between a company and its different publics. This is an area where public relations play a major role. A website has a two-fold function: on the one hand, it should reflect the company's

image, and at the same time, it should make sure to give all the information that is important from the point of view of the consumer.

From the public relations perspective, it is important since communication of relevant information brings about a positive understanding between the different publics and the organization. Since a website allows for interaction between an organization and its public, it will foster long-term relations between the two for the sustainability of a business.

4. Blogs: It's short for weblog and somewhat similar to a website; it is a frequently updated webpage; it is used for personal commentary or business content. It permits a blogger to write web-pages. Business houses use blogs as a marketing tool, and it helps businesses to create brand awareness and improve brand image and corporate reputation. It helps consumers learn about the company's activities and its products and services. It helps in backlinks and also in networking. Blogs as a public relations communication tool can be used to help build CSR activities and to build customer relations and community relations. This goes a long way toward developing good overall relationships for the business.

5. Twitter(X): The best ambassador for Twitter(X) is its CEO, Elon Musk. It's a social networking site. Its main purpose is to connect people and to allow people to share their opinions and views. It is used to follow high-profile celebrities and to stay in touch with friends old and new. It allows each user to post and control their content as per

their interests. Businesses can greatly benefit from Twitter since it allows for gathering market intelligence. When a special hashtag is associated with a business, it can be identified when someone mentions that hashtag. It is a great source of real-time data. By constantly checking through trending topics on Twitter, we can get information about a particular industry.

Twitter helps companies to directly communicate with their customers and get feedback immediately; this enables companies to have better customer relations. Good customer relationships help companies to give improved services to their customers and help in brand loyalty. Brand loyalty goes a long way toward sustaining a company to survive in the market.

6. Podcast: Podcasts are distributed online, it is a curated, and radio-style program. The audience can listen to it through their computers, tables, or the internet. But an “Internet” connection is a must; they are distributed online.

Podcasting allows one to overcome geographic and time barriers. It allows the audience to listen to your content from anywhere in the world, at any time that suits them. It is an excellent marketing tool for business. It is an inexpensive and effective way to reach out to, and in addition to building brand awareness, podcasting allows you to discover and learn about new topics. This is a great way to grow your business.

In addition to building brand awareness, podcasting allows you to discover and learn about new topics. This is a great

tool to expand a business. Podcasting is an excellent platform for marketing your business. It is an inexpensive and effective way to reach out to an audience. Podcasting is also a great way to attract new customers and establish relationships.

7. Video News Release: After the introduction of ICT's most broadcast channels are looking for video news releases. The audio and video news releases are supplied to channels for broadcasting to the public. These are again edited by the television channels according to their available space and time. These are very easy to handle by television channels. The companies also get good coverage. And they can be transmitted across large geographical areas for a large and varied audience.

8. Facebook: Facebook can be used not only for personal use but as a medium for showcasing businesses. It allows a business to access and reach its target audience in the most cost-effective way. It is an ideal tool to build brand image and loyalty for a business. It allows a business to create brand awareness and attract potential customers. It allows businesses to directly deal with their customers, thereby allowing for the sharing of feedback and the giving of better services.

9. Instagram: Instagram helps companies leverage their businesses through advertising. It helps in targeted campaigns. It helps to connect with potential customers instantly. It also helps companies to sell their products directly. Customers and companies can initiate dialogue

and build business relationships. Companies can improve brand value and corporate image through their Instagram pages.

Businesses operate in a dynamic environment. They are acted upon by political, economic, social, and technological forces. These factors continuously affect the companies at some point in their existence. Another important aspect is the expectations of different publics on the company with their needs and wants. In this kind of scenario, it is public relations with its different communication tools, which plays a crucial role in bringing about a balance between the publics.

For the sustainability of any business, public relations communication is important for its smooth and efficient functioning. The progress and development of any organization is possible only when the different stakeholder groups understand the philosophy, vision, and mission of the company. It is through public relations exercises that companies built enduring relationships with the different publics through mutual understanding.

Public relations bring about equilibrium to a business by its deliberate and sustained effort to bring about mutual understanding so that companies can find sustainability in growth and development into the future. Any business with a long-term vision and mission needs to have a robust public relations philosophy. In this globalized world, any company with an objective and goal to survive and sustain itself in the global market place should have a sound public relations program to stabilize in the market.

Public relations are a prerequisite for a company to effectively and efficiently maintain good relationships with the different stakeholders who are its lifeline. While every business has short and long-term goals, it is the public relations function with its tools that can create the required positive environment for achieving the goals.

Businesses develop strategies for long-term sustainability. Globalization has ushered in different kinds of challenges for companies, and depending on any one kind of promotion will not help in creating brand awareness for its long-term survival. Public relations help in shaping public opinion and creating a positive reputation and credibility in the minds of the potential customer, which will increase a company's image in the market. This has a cascading effect since it will reflect on the other marketing functions of the company and thereby increase sales.

A good reputation brings in investors and partnerships, and this will help in collaborations and tie-ups for the company and, in turn, help in expansion and the sustainability of a business. Public relations help in investor relationships and, together with lobbying, creates a network of publics that supports it at all times, which is crucial for its growth and market expansion. The support and patronage of different publics is important for any company and its sustainability.

Brand image, corporate image, brand loyalty, and brand identity are all important factors for a company. These cannot be built overnight and need long-term strategies and programs. Even if these are built, to sustain them requires a

positive perception in the minds of the customer. These cannot be achieved by directly targeting the potential consumer. It is here that public relations play a pivotal role with the use of its different tools.

While marketing, sales, and advertising target the potential customer directly, it is public relations through its different tools that creates a favourable environment in the minds of the potential customer and nudges him in thinking positively about the product.

Conclusion

With the advent of new information communication technologies and the ubiquitous digital gadgets, information communication has become the need of the hour. Public relations have evolved and adapted itself to the new digital revolution and utilized the new technology to its advantage. Public relations become a driving force for companies to expand beyond boundaries and tap into different markets economically to make companies sustainable in the globalized market place.

Public relations have resolved crisis situations and turned around companies from extinction to help regain brand image. For any business to sustain itself in the industry is important, and sustainability comes from credibility. It is here that public relations help companies to build that trust, which is important for their long-term survival. With its different communication tools, public relations can be used for different segments of the public at different times for the desired results.

Public relations is not a firefighting exercise; it is a strategically developed multi-pronged activity aimed at creating a long-term relationship for the mutually beneficial understanding of all the stake holders of a company. It is only when the different publics understand the vision and mission of the company that they will willingly support it and give their best for the company. By creating this understanding and support for a company, it ensures long-term sustainability for the organization.

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