

A LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE USES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

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ABSTRACT

Public relations or PR is a multidimensional discipline with no consistent definition. It is the discipline that looks after an organization's status, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing public opinion and behaviour. PR is a planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between organization and its publics. Conventionally, PR belongs to marketing and is considered as a branch of promotional activities. However, some authors consider PR as a managerial function since it deals with the organization's dealings with both internal and external public. The obscurity of PR will probably bring even more theoretical discussion among marketing and management professionals. The roots of PR reach far into the history, but the

Introduction:

Public relations or PR for short is a concept of public relations and/or communication with the target audience which consists of organization's internal and external publics compared with e.g. advertising, PR is considered as a relatively young and fast growing discipline. PR, as a part of the marketing communications or promotional mix, is widely used in the commercial sector. However, its applications could also be found in the non-commercial area. One, from the public point of view, very important non-

fundamentals of the modern concept of PR could be found in the revolutionary propaganda efforts against the British Monarchy during the American Revolution. Besides it's used for commercial and political purposes. PR also plays an important role in the context of public healthcare communication activities. Like never before, PR in public healthcare is faced with so many challenges and expectations. Today's PR has to deal with a broad viewpoint of health related issues and needs of target markets, together with taking into account financial aspects of healthcare services. The objective of this paper is to provide better understanding of the use of PR in the public healthcare system and to identify possible gaps in the available literature. The study adopts a mixed reaction method which combines descriptive, participants' observation and survey technique used for the study. Moreso, the practical aspect of PR in the public healthcare could also be comparatively approached from both marketing and management perspective.

Keywords: *public relations, PR, public healthcare, managerial function, organization.*

Commercial area is the public healthcare system. Due to its nature, the public healthcare system is often being criticized by wider public, professionals and academics. Consequently, the public healthcare system could be considered as a non-commercial area with the continuous need for effective public relations activities.

This paper provides an overview of the literatures of public relations within the public healthcare system. Firstly, a role of public relations within the commercial marketing context explained, together with the brief historical overview of the discipline. Secondly, PR is analyzed from the perspective of social marketing, with specific focus on the public healthcare system. Based on the literature review, the authors' main goal is to detect possible gaps in the body of knowledge and establish a theoretical framework which will be used as a starting point for the future empirical research.

PUBLIC REALTIONS AND MARKETING

Defining Public Relations

Finding the right definition for public relations is not an easy task. There is no central definition widely accepted among both practitioners and theoreticians. In 1979, Harlow tried to come up with the general definition of public relations, yet he found almost 500 different definitions (Euler, 2009). With no doubt, this number only grew during the last forty years. Public Relations professional help a business or individual cultivate a positive reputation with the public through various unpaid or earned communications, including traditional media, social media, and in person engagements. They also help clients defend their reputation during a crisis that threatens their credibility.

DEFINITIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A MULTI FACETED FIELD

Public Relations is not an easy profession to define. According to the public Relations society of American (PRSA) 2012, accepted a few thousand submissions before finally agreeing on a definitions. "Public Relation is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics.

PR also evokes many controversies. Scholars from different areas cannot agree whether PR belongs to marketing or is a separate management area. From the traditional marketing point of view, PR is considered as a part of the promotion mix, together with advertising, sales promotion, personal selling and direct advertising. In the context, PR could be defines as "a body that serves the department of marketing." (Kotler and Keller, 2008, p. 594) PR could also be defined as a marketing program that encourages purchase and consumers satisfaction through credible communication of impressions and information. As Seitel (2006, p. 39) suggested, PR is marketing of an organization to relay information about the organizations products".

DEFINATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS WITH MARKETING CONTEXT

According to Heidi Cohen, PR is the part of Riverside marketing strategies, a marketing and communications strategy that crafts an organizations message(s) to its diverse publics including customers, prospects),

investors, employees, suppliers, distributors, media journalists, social media networks, the government and the public. Given communications and media evolution, these messages can be communicated one-to-many, one-to-one and/or many to-many across owned media, third party media and/or social media via online and offline vehicles.

THE 5P'S OF MARKETING MIX

Overall, one may say that Public Relation is concerned with creating a favourable image, or, to use a less emotive word, a favourable reputation. The emergence of reputation as a factor in the marketing mix leads on business to the extension of the classical 4P's into five. The fourth 'P' of promotion (which more properly should be perception) now has to be considered as those activities which are involved with the product (brand image) and those concerned with the company (corporate image). It can be said that whether or not a product is purchased is dependent on five factors: the product, its price, its availability, the brand image and the corporate image so far as PR is the function which builds reputation or corporate image it can be seen then to have a direct correlation to sales and hence to profit" (Davis, 2007, p. 130-131).

Many definitions imply that PR belongs to the field of management, since its goal within the organization is to plan, analyze and implement various communications with the public. It is considered as a "relationship management" (Ledingham and Bruning, 1998). According to the recent trends, PR is positioned at the very top of the corporation hierarchy. Following this idea the chambered Institute for Public Relations (CIPR, 2010) sees PR as: "the discipline which looks after reputation, with the aim of earning understanding and support and influencing opinion and behaviour. It is planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between organization and its public." Broom (2009, p. 25) argues that "Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and the public on whom its success or failure depends". The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) offered

explanations of what PR really does: “Public Relations helps an organization and its publics to adapt mutually to each other. PR is an organization effort to win the co-operation of groups of people helps organizations effectively interact and communicate with their key publics” (Davies, 2007, p.6).

However, marketing and public relations, although being separate management functions, overlap in order to achieve companies goals. As Davis (2007) suggested PR contributes to marketing’s goals by maintaining and providing a hospitable social and political environment. Kotler (1991) argued that public relations can contribute to marketing in four objectives: Awareness, credibility, stimulation and holding down promotion costs. However public relations and marketing are separate fields like finances, accounting, human resources, law etc. Just because public relations correlates more with marketing than with other branches of an organization don’t mean that it is a part of marketing strictly. Marketing was being known as a “big brother” to public relations but clearly it just uses parts of public relations for bettering itself, therefore it would be better to say that they are equal “brothers” of an organization.

The rivalry between marketing and public relations will continue on but never the less it is undisputable that marketing will continue on concentrating on consumer’s needs and wants, while public relations will continue enhancing relationships internally and externally. However, there are also suggestions to join PR and marketing. For example Kotler suggested that public relations and marketing could be joined into marketing public relations (MPR): a healthy offspring of two parents, marketing and public relations’. MPR represents an opportunity for companies to regain a share voice to win share of mind companies to regain a share voice to win share of mind and heart; it also delivers a better, more effective voice in many cases, (Kotler, 1991, p. 29).

As an ambiguous term, PR is rather difficult to define. Due to its multifaceted nature, public relations could be considered as a part of both marketing and management. It is a set of activities which is used to manage

organization's image and relationships with both internal and external public.

The 5P's of marketing- product, price, promotion, place and people are key marketing elements used to position a business strategically.

Price: Price refers to the pricing strategy for products and services and how it will affect customers. Pricing decisions do not include just the selling price, but also discounts, payment arrangements, credit terms, or any other price, matching services offered. When determining a pricing strategy, it is important to consider the business's position in the current market place. For example, if the business is advertised as a high quality provider of mechanical equipment, the product pricing should reflect that.

Product: Product refers to the products and services offered by a business product decisions offered by a business. Product decisions include function, packaging, appearance, warranty, quality etc.

Customers need to understand the features, advantages and benefits that can be enjoyed by buying the goods or services. When thinking about a product, consider the key features, benefits and the needs and wants of customers.

Promotion: Promotion refers to the activities that make the business more known to consumers. It includes items such as sponsorships, advertising, and public relation activities since promotion costs can be substantial, it is essential to conduct a break-even analysis when making promotion decisions. It is important to understand the value of a customer and whether it is worth conducting promotions to acquire them.

Place: place refers to where the product/service of the business is seen, made, sold or distributed. In essence, place decisions are associated with distribution s channels and ways of getting the product to target key customers. It is important to consider how accessible the product or service is and ensure that customers can easily find you. The product or service must be available to customers at the right time, at the right place, and in the right quantity.

For example, a business may want to provide their products over an e-commerce site, at a retail store or through a third party distributor.

People: people refer to the staff, sales people and those who work for the business. People's decisions are usually centered around customer service and how you want your employees to be perceived by customers.

FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations department supervises and assess public attitudes, and maintaining mutual relations and understanding between an organization and its publics. It improves channels of communication and to institute new ways of setting up a two way flow of information and understanding.

Media Relations:

- Preparing position papers on issues of importance to the organization
- Handling publicity
- Issuing news of activities to external audiences
- Establishing and maintaining contacts with the mass media
- Handling responses to inquiries from the mass media
- Coordinating media conferences and tours
- Tracking and evaluating media coverage

Guest Relations:

- Guest reception activities
- Preparing visit agenda and other visit related matters
- Conducting university tours
- Preparing brochures, tour guides, tapes, videos, maps and other guest-related communications materials
- Preparing gift items for the visitors

Publications:

- Preparing and publishing materials for publics including dealers, agents, advisory bodies and employees
- Helping out other departments to promote and publish event announcements and other event related advertisement materials.

Marketing Publicity:

- Announcing new products or services and enhancements in products and services, through editorial channels of mass media
- Developing and executing promotional materials
- Participating in exhibits and marketing events
- Developing a good working climate for the organization
- Providing PR services to other departments (photographic services, providing gift items and etc).
- Organizing events
- Providing public information
- Managing sponsorship
- Building and Managing Relationships with other Companies

Internal Relations:

This refers to the communication processes aimed at organization's internal public. Internal relations manage the communication inside the organization managing the information that employee's receive. Public relations department organizes communication programs to keep employers motivated. It can be said that internal relations takes care of everyone inside the organization.

Lobbying – is a narrow specialized branch of public relations with the goal to create and maintain relations with government and governmental bodies to influence legislation and regulations. Because of popular believes that lobbying is related to bribery and threats, it is highly criticized and frowned upon. Despite that general mark, lobbying is a legal way to influence government decision making. Most countries in the world have a certain organization where lobbyists are registered and where they report their work.

Advertising- could be considered as a media for placing PR messages. In this context, PR uses advertising as a tool to approach wider public through mass media by controlling the content, placing and timing. Although advertising typically falls under the category of commercial goods or services marketing, it is not solely reserved for it. Public relations can use

advertisements as part of the communication effort with external public in order to improve volunteers, etc.

Investors Relations – is also known as financial relations. It is part of public relations that work in publicly held corporations (i.e. joint stock companies). Investor relations communication activities are focused on a specific target group, the investors and the financial community (e.g. investment banks).

Issues management – is a function of public relations that anticipates, prepares and reacts in crisis or whenever there is a need to respond to public policy issues. Issues management preserves the relationship of an organization and its public (Lauzen, 1997; Health, 1997).

BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PUBLIC RELATION

Most textbooks date the establishment of the “publicity bureau”. In 1900 as the start of modern public relations (P.R) profession of course there were many early forms of public influence and communications management in history. Basil Clarke is considered the founder of the public relations profession in Britain with his establishment of Editorial services in 1924. Academic Noel Turnbull points out that systematic PR was employed in Britain first by religious evangelicals and victorian reformers, especially opponents of slavery. In each case the early promotes focused on their particular movement and were not for hire more generally.

Propaganda was used by both sides to rally domestic support and demonize enemies during the First World War. PR activists entered the private sector in the 1920s. Public relations became established first in the US by Ivy Lee or Edward Bernays, then spread internally. Many American companies with PR departments spread the practice to Europe after 1948 when they created European subsidiaries as a result of Marshall Plan.

The second half of the twentieth century was the professional development building era of public relations. Trade associations, PR news magazines, international PR agencies and academic principles for the profession were established. In the early 2005, press release services began offering social media press releases. The cluetrain Manifesto, which predicted the impact

of social media in 1999, was controversial in its time, but by 2006, the effect of social media and new internet technologies became broadly accepted. Although the term “public relations” was not yet developed, academics like James E Grunig and Scott cutlip identified early forms of public influence and communications management in ancient civilizations.

According to Edward Bernays, one of the Pioneer of PR, “The three main elements of public relations are practically as old as society: informing people, persuading people, or integrating people with people.” Scott cutlip said historic events have been defined as PR retrospectively, “a decision with which many may quarrel”.

A clay tablet found in ancient Iraq that promoted more advanced agricultural techniques is sometimes considered the first known example of public Relations. Babylonian, Egyptian and Persian leaders created pyramids, Obelisks and statues to promote their divine right to lead. Additionally, claims of magic or religious authority were used to persuade the public of a king or Pharaohs right to rule.

Ancient Greek cities produced sophisticated rhetoric as analyzed by Isocrates, Plato and Aristotle. In Greece there were advocates for hire called “Sohists”. Plato and other said sophists were dishonest and misled the public, while the book “public Relations as communication Management” said they were “largely an ethical let” that “used the principles of persuasive communication”. In Egypt court advisers consulted pharaohs to speak honestly and scribes documented a Pharaoh’s deeds. In Rome Julius Caesar write the first campaign biography promoting his military success. He also commissioned newsletters and poems to support his political position. In medieval Europe, craftsmen organized into guilds that managed their collective reputation. In England, Lord Chancellors acted as mediators between rulers and subjects.

Pope urban is recruitment for the crusades is also sometimes referred to as a public relations effort. Pope Gregory xv founded the term “propaganda. (“Congregation for propagating the faith”), which used trained missionaries to spread Christianity. The term did not carry negative connotations until it was associated with government publicity around

World War II. In the early 1200s, the Magna Carta was created as a result of Stephen Langton lobbying English barons to insist King John recognized the authority of the church.

ORIGIN OF P.R AS A PROFESSION

The Book Today's Public Relation: An introduction says that, although experts disagree on public relations origins, many identify the early 1900s as its beginning as a paid profession. According to Barbara Brown, an academic with the America University school of communication the PR field anchors its work in historical alidity, but it didn't begin as a professional field until around 1900. Scott Cutlip said "we somewhat arbitrarily place the beginnings of the public relations vocation with the establishment of the publicity bureau in Boston in mid-1900." He explains that the origins of PR cannot be pinpointed to an exact date, because it developed over time through a series of events. Most textbooks on public relations say that it was first developed in the United States, before expanding globally however, Jacquie L'Etang, an academic form the United Kingdom, said it was developed in the UK and the US simultaneously. Noel Turnball claims it begun as a professional field in the 18th and 19th century with British evangelicals and victorian reformers. According to academic BettekeVan Ruler, PR activities didn't begin in continental Europe as a professional field until the 1920's.

According to Goldman, from around 1903 to 1909 "many newspapers and virtually all mass circulation magazines featured detailed, indignant articles describing how some industry fleeced its stockholders over changed the public or corrupted politics. "The public became abruptly more critical of big business the anti-corporate and pro-reform sentiment of the progressive era was reflected in newspapers, which were dramatically increasing in circulation as the cost of paper decreased. Public relations was founded, in part, to, defend corporate interests against sensational and hyper-critical news articles. It was also influential in promoting consumerism after the emergence of mass production.

EARLY PIONEERS

The publicity bureau was the first PR agency and was founded by former Boston journalists, including Ivy Lee. Ivy Lee is sometimes called the father of PR and was influential in establishing it as a professional practice. In 1906, Lee published a declaration of principles, which said that PR work should be done in the open, should be accurate and cover topics of public interest. According to historian Eric Goldman, the declaration of principles marked the beginning of an emphasis on informing, rather than misleading, the public. Ivy Lee is also credited with developing the modern press release and the “two-way-sheet philosophy of both listening to and communicating with the public. In 1906, Lee helped facilitate the Pennsylvania Railroad's first positive media coverage after inviting press to the scene of a railroad accident, despite objections from executives. At the time, secrecy about corporate operations was common practice. Lee's work was often identified as spin or propaganda. In 1913 and 1914, the mining union was blaming the Ludlow massacre, where on strike miners and their families were killed by state militia, on the Rockefeller family and their coal mining operation, the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. On the Rockefeller family's behalf, Lee published bulletins called “facts concerning the struggle in Colorado for industrial freedom”, which contained false and misleading information. Lee warned that Rockefellers were losing public support and developed a strategy that, to overcome his shyness, go personally to Colorado to meet with the miners and their families, inspect the conditions of the homes and the factories, attend social events, and especially to listen closely to the grievances. This was novel advice, and attend social events, and especially to listen closely to the grievance. This was novel advice, and attracted widespread media attention, which opened the way to resolve the conflict, the present a more humanized versions of the Rockefellers. In response the labour press said Lee “twisted the facts” and called him a “paid liar” a hired slanderer” and a poisoner of public opinion. By 1917, Bethlehem steel company announced it would start a publicity campaign against perceived errors about them. The Y.M.C.A opened a new press secretary. AT & T and others also started their first publicity programs

Edward Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud, is also sometimes referred to as the father of PR and the profession's first theorist for his work in the 1920s. He took the approach that audiences had to be carefully understood and persuaded to see things from the client's perspective. He wrote the first textbook on PR and taught the first college course at New York University in 1923. Bernays also first introduced the practice of using front groups in order to protect tobaccos interests. In the 1930's he started the first vocational course in PR. Bernays was influenced by Freud's theories about the subconscious. He authored several books, including crystallizing public opinion (1923), propaganda (1928) and the engineering of consent (1947). He saw PR as an "applied social science" that uses insights from psychology, sociology, and other disciplines to scientifically manage and manipulate the thinking and behavior of an irrational and "herd like" public.

In 1929, Edward Bernays helped the lucky strike cigarette brand increase its sales among female demographic. Research showed that women were reluctant to carry a pack of lucky strike cigarettes because the brands green colour scheme clashed with popular fashion choices. Bernays persuaded fashion designers, charity events interior designs and others to popularize the colour green. He also positioned cigarettes as torches of freedom that represent rebellion against the norms of a male-dominated society.

According to Ruth Edgett from syracuse University, Lee and Bernays both had "initial and spectacular successes in raising PR from the art of the snake oil salesman to the calling for a true communicator" however, "late in their careers, both Lee and Bernays took on clients with clearly reprehensible values, thus exposing themselves and their work to public criticism. Walter Lippmann was also a contributor to early PR theory, for his work on the books Public opinion (1922) and the phantom (1925). He coined the term "manufacture of consent", which is based on the idea that the public's consent must be coaxed by experts to support a democratic society. Former journalist Basil Clarke is considered the founder of PR in the UK. He founded the UK's first PR agency. Editorial services 1924. He also authored the world's first code of ethics for the field in 1929.

Clarke wrote that PR, “must look time and it must look complete and candid or its ‘credit’ is gone. He suggested that the selection of which facts are disseminated by PR campaigns could be used to persuade the public. The longest established UK PR agency is Richmond towers, founded by Suzanne Richmond and Marjorie Towers in 1930.

Arthur w.page is sometimes considered to be the father of “corporate public reflections” for his work with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) from 1927 to 1946. The company was experiencing resistance from the public to his monopolization efforts. In the early 1900s AT&T had assessed that 90percent of its press coverage was negative which was reduced to 60 percent by changing its business practices and disseminating information to the press. According to business historian John Brooks, page positioned the company as a public utility and increased the public appreciation for its contributions to society. On the otherhand, Stuart Ewen writes that AT&T used its advertising dollars with newspapers to manipulate its coverage and had their PR team write features imitating independent journalism.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE PUBLIC HEALTHCARE DEVELOPMENT

According to William C. Shiel Jr., (2018) public health is the approach to medicine that is concerned with the health of the community as a whole. Public health is community health, it has been said that “health care is vital to all of us some of the time, but public health is vital to all of us all of the time”. The history of public healthcare can be traced to ancient times and shamans that cured and prevented disease (Porter, 1998). During fifth and fourth centuries B.C. a Greek doctor Hippocrates explained disease and therefore rejected supernatural causes (Adams and Arbor, 1976).

A step towards creating beginnings of the public healthcare started in the sixth century in Europe during the outbreak of leprosy. Physicians separated patients which brought to opening of “leprosaria”, leper houses and the beginning of quarantine. It is estimated that by the end of twelve century there were more than 19,000 “medical” houses open in Europe

(Frontinus, 1950). By the middle of fifteen century, major cities in Italy established boards of health who were in charge of investigating existence of plague, establishing quarantine, issuing health passes, arranging burials and managing leprosaria (Cipolla, 1976). In Germany, between 1779 and 1816, a major contribution to public health was made by Johann Peter Frank, a hospital administrator, published a six volume proposal “System of Complete Medical Policy” where he showed a scheme of governmental programs to promote health and protect population from disease. (Ackerknecht, 1982). Next and one of the most important steps in defining public health was publishing of “Report of a General Plan for Promotion of public and Personal Health” in 1850, authored by Lemuel Shattuck, first president of the American Statistical Association. This report brought fifty recommendations and a model of state public health law (Rosen, 1993). In the twentieth century complexity of public health problems led to the establishment of academic programs to expand research. University of London and Harvard University were the pioneers of those research programs. By the mind twentieth century, public health activities had evolved into fields of: communicable diseases control, environmental sanitation, maternal and child health services, health education, occupational and industrial hygiene, nutrition, and, in most developed countries, the provision of medical care (Wallace, 1998). Today it can be said that public health services function all around the World preventing diseases and influencing behavioural factors.

SOCIAL MARKETING AND PUBLIC HEALTHCARE

The concept of public relations within the healthcare is grounded on the fundamentals of social marketing. As it is known from the previous sections, public relations can function as a part of marketing mix. When it comes to public healthcare, public relations lead a crucial part in social marketing. Kotler and Zaltman first introduce the concept of social marketing in the early seventies (Kotler and Zaltman, 1971). The authors defined social marketing as “the design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving

considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and market research. It is the explicit use of marketing skills to help translate social action efforts into more effectively designed and communicated programs that elicit desired audience response. (ibid, p6). More recently, the definition of social marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon behaviour for the benefit of individuals, groups or society as a whole". (Kotler, Roberto and Lee, 2002, p.5).

Nevertheless, social marketing has encountered some controversy when it comes to public health care. As Willcocks when it comes to public health care. As Willcocks (2008) noted, the application of marketing to health care has been the subject of some skepticism from various sources, not least healthcare employees, due to the following reasons:

Marketing is more about commercial as opposed to healthcare objectives;
The competition upon which marketing is based will bring about the pursuit of profit and not quality of care;

Health care is different from other services/products, and is less amenable to the techniques and approaches of marketing;

Healthcare is, to a large extent, an intangible service, while marketing primarily deals tangible products;

Healthcare is a unique service because of the individual freedom of clinicians;

Healthcare operates with unpredictable demand; and it is ambiguous in terms of being unable to offer a precise definition of the "customer".

In spite of the criticism, social marketing could create benefits to healthcare and the public;

"The discipline of marketing offers public health organizations a variety of concepts and strategies for understanding and motivating behaviour change in specific populations of interest. Public health organizations use these techniques not only to influence individual health behaviour, but also to build public support for core public health policies and institutions. Using a marketing approach can therefore enable organizations to improve the effectiveness of specific health interventions and to strengthen the

institutional capacity of the public health system as a whole. The appropriate use of marketing can help public health practitioners be more effective in today's environment". (Lothenberg and Siegel, 2008, p. 621-623).

Communications, as in every interactive field, plays an important role in the context of social marketing and healthcare. As Evans (2006, p. 1208) stated, "Social marketing messages can aim to prevent risky behaviour through education or the promotion of behavioural alternatives". But social marketing shouldn't be just public relations. Social marketing evolved from commercial marketing and its framework, so it includes market research, public segmentation, competition, marketing mix, consumer orientation and monitoring (Grier and Bryant, 2005).

SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS WITHIN PUBLIC HEALTHCARE

Communication plays an important role in the context of public healthcare. The role of communication in performing the public healthcare services could be summarised as follows (Harrell, Baker and the Essential Services Work Group, 1994; Morrow, Hirano and Christensen, 2008):

Monitor health status and solve community health problems. Communication role: Deliver relevant health status information to communities, particularly changes in rates that suggest the need for intervention; provide an opportunity for communities to voice concerns about perceived health problems.

Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community. Communication role: notify individuals and communities of potential health hazards (e.g. issue traveler's advisories in areas with known vector-borne disease transmission).

Inform, educate and empower people about health issues. Communication role: Use multiple levels of communication, including social marketing and community education, to bring about healthy lifestyles.

Mobilize community partnerships and action to identify and solve health problems. Communication role: Assist in the development of coalitions and partnerships that will lead to collaborative action.

Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts. Communication role: inform the public about new laws that affect health, such as laws protecting the confidentiality of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome information; share draft planning documents with stakeholders as a means to receive input and generate investment and outcomes.

Enforce laws and regulations that protect and ensure safety. Communication role: share information with the regulated community to facilitate the adherence to proper licensing and safety standards; ensure easy access (e.g. website availability) to the required forms and rules relating to licensing and regulation.

Link people to needed personal health services and ensure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable. Communication role: inform medically underserved population about opportunities for health care and the need for preventive services.

Ensure a competent public health and personal health care workforce. Communication role: inform public health practitioners and health care providers about training opportunities, such as satellite video-conferences. Evaluate effectiveness accessibility and quality of personal and population-based health services. Communication role: Inform policy makers about the efficacy of population based health services.

Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems. Communication role: Publish results of applied research in peer reviewed journals so that other agencies can translate findings into more effective public health practice.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a mixed method which combines descriptive, participants' observation and survey technique used for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Like never before, public healthcare is faced with so many challenges and expectations. Thanks to the development of internet, health related news travel around the globe almost instantaneously. However, their sources are usually journalists with no formal medical education. While some 60 years ago PR practitioners in healthcare had an easy job to create awareness and preference for healthcare since the healthcare organizations of that time enjoyed public support and sympathy (Tomic, Lasic and Tomic, 2010). Today's PR has to deal with much broader perspective of health related issues and needs of target markets, together with taking into account financial aspects of healthcare services (Traynowicz-Hetherington, Ekachai, and Parkinson, 2001; Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2003).

Public health is of critical importance to everyone. In today's world of bioterrorism and threatening epidemics, public healthcare institutions create a border to global threats towards health and security (Institute of Medicine, 2003). Through public relations public health care creates "effective delivery of health care at the front line" (Millward and Bryan, 2005, p.13). Malpractice, scandals mistakes and misunderstanding occur in medical and health care like in any other organization. Because of the nature of public healthcare, it is the task of PR to help in bringing public health care institutions and public together by providing accurate information.

PR should be used for both internal and external public in the process of focusing of the user's (i.e. patients) wants and needs, because "patients sometimes feel treated as numbers, are made to await too long, do not have their condition or treatment explained sufficiently, feel lost in the stream, receive poor customer service, are denied and experience basic lapses in care" (Department of Health, 2007, p.23).

However, there are also some mixed emotions towards the use of PR among public healthcare professionals. While there is a presence of enthusiasm towards PR it produces highly desirable outcomes (e.g. a news coverage for a flood evaluation plan, fund-raising for some social cause,

etc.) (Springston and Weaver Lariscy, 2005), the PR activities are highly scrutinized for their return on investment (Hutchins, 2001).

CONCLUSION

PR is considered as a multifaceted field which belongs to both marketing and management. Scholars from different marketing and management areas have been trying to address the problem whether public relation is a separate management field of marketing. As the literature review shows, their opinions are relatively opposed and there are also certain tendencies for the manager of different marketing functions in order to address the multifaceted nature of PR. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of PR will probably bring even more theoretical discussion among marketing and management experts.

Assessing the topic from the public healthcare perspective, it could be concluded that public relations, as a social marketing communication tool, plays very important role in today's very challenging environment. Social marketing and public relations are recognized by the public healthcare system as the concept focused on users and their needs. However, there is a certain research potential for further investigation of the practical application of PR within the public healthcare system, especially in less-developed countries. Furthermore, the practical aspect of PR in the public healthcare could also be comparatively approached from both marketing and management perspective.

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