Relevance of the role of media in public relations

The media — the biggest medium through which information flows — is known as the Fourth Estate for a reason. Along with the executive, legislature, and judiciary, they wield so much power because of their influence and impact in the society. Power that evidently unsettles certain quarters.

The media is so powerful such that the negative reportage about an individual or organisation will affect their image or reputation.
Conversely, positive reportage can also enhance the image and reputation of that organisation.

The kind and amount of information disseminated by the media about an individual or organisation, brand, service or product would have a significant role in shaping perceptions.

Information related to business is also a critical component for foreign businesses in deciding to invest in a country.

The media presents a huge opportunity for the organisation to send certain messages about their organisation to the public and other stakeholders. As a result, developing good relations with the media becomes an essential activity

Paul Argenti, a public relations expert is quoted as saying that the media is both a constituency and a conduit through which investors, suppliers, retailers and consumers receive information about and develop images of the organisation.

Organisations use the media to gain “third-party endorsement”. The conventional wisdom is that information is more credible when conveyed by the media. This lies on the assumption that the media has no vested interest.

Howes and Sallot assert that the “endorsement effect” is what has motivated public relations (PR) practitioners to consider when developing communication strategies.

There is a long-held view in PR practice that information published or broadcast in news media takes on an added value because it has been approved by an independent third party gatekeeper and conveyed by an independent, supposedly unbiased news medium.

There is the assumption that organisations are biased and guided by a self-interested perspective it wishes to advance.

Coverage by an independent media has greater credibility because there is the possibility that it is fact-based, has been vetted and screened, and that it has not been paid for, which allows for balance and other voices in the story.

However, when talking to PR practitioners in the field, there are things about reporters that keep them up at night. These are reporters who “never let the facts get in the way of the story” through selectively including or excluding information or failing to check the facts.

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In the business world, **public relations** and media relations are often used interchangeably as they appear to be confusingly similar. But these are different business processes. Public relations is the act of maintaining, fostering and improving relations between others and your business. On the other hand, media relations is a part of public relations limited to the company’s interaction with journalists, bloggers, editors, reporters and others in the media business.

Having public relations and media relations divisions, or at least a representative for each one, is essential for every business. In order to maintain the distinction between the two, we will consider the importance of public relations and media relations separately.

## The Importance of Public Relations For Your Business

Every company needs a public relations department, or they must at least outsource this work to a PR consultant or agency. It is an essential part of maintaining and enhancing the organization and brand’s image in the public eye, and sending a message to general public, customers and investors that you care. This kind of positive approach will help improve trust and that adds directly to your bottom line. So what are the key PR tasks you need to focus on, and how are they important for you?

**Image Strategy in Public**

The public relation strategists will cooperate with the high level executives of an organization to design the outline of how it’s going to craft a positive image and how the company wants to be perceived. This focusses on the right message and then decides on the outline of a campaign to circulate the message.

**Event Marketing**

Public relation executives frequently arrange events to increase a company’s profile. They lend their name and brand to an event that highlights the philosophy, brand and products or services of the organization. For instance, think of a hospital organizing a health day outreach, or a corporation’s special Olympics event sponsorship.

**Media Relations**

Interacting with the media is the main function of your relations department. They can arrange interviews with important individuals in the company, field questions from reporters, and write press releases to make the media aware of company announcements and achievements

Media relations is a vital part of public relations. Many organizations misinterpret the differences between marketing, direct advertising and media relations.The ultimate aim is to get free media coverage without spending money directly through advertising.

**Media Relations Functions**

Pitching and placing stories is the traditional role of media relations. Building relationships is the most critical part of media relations. The idea is to fulfill reporters’ information requests as a company spokesperson and become a trusted resource for reporters.

**Execution of Media Relations**

Read and digest all new and traditional media coverage of your company. Include local media, online outlets and bloggers as RSS feed is important for online publishing. Research the outlets that cover and that you want to cover your organization. Find out what kind of stories they like to run and after proper research, filter appropriate stories for specific outlets. Use internet resources to track stories, writers and issues through online tracking services like Google Alert, Facebook, Lexus-Nexus, Dow Jones, Topsy, Addict-O-Matic and more.

Understand journalists’ needs, know what they write about and know to respect their  deadlines but never waste their time. Write individual pitches to target specific bloggers or reporters. Communicate with management by compiling and distributing weekly and daily ‘e-clipping reports’. Develop Media Relations plans that support organizational objectives and talk about publicity opportunities. Ideally, a good balance between public relations and media relations is a good strategy to achieve a company’s goals.

In the world of media, journalism appears on stage, but it is the backstage people who are the real movers and shakers — the advertisers and marketing professionals, the PR people and lobbyists. Journalism, Advertising, and Public Relations have traditionally been seen as an integrated discipline in Indian academia. Till the boom in 24X7 news channels of the mid-2000s, all three were seen as equal. Since then, however, the last two seem to have receded in public perception, with journalism attracting more students, thanks to its glamorous image projected by sting operations, and sensationalism. Such erasure of integrated disciplines leads to uneven growth of the industry as a whole.

Practitioners ignore interdisciplinarity at their peril, as is now evident in the widespread ignorance of PR and lobbying as legitimate professions that need to be understood and accommodated within the media ecology. The problem of lack of students and faculty is compounded by the lack of good textbooks written by Indian authors from, and for, an Indian context.