Chapter Five
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5. Implications, Conclusions and Suggestions for future study

In this chapter the research questions stated in chapter one are going to be answered, based on the data and analysis conducted in chapter four. Further, implications of this study for management, theory and future research will be provided.

In this chapter the most important findings revealed in the analysis chapter will be summarized and discussed. These findings aim to answer the research questions and the purpose of this thesis.

5.1 Discussions

For several years, a revolution in communication has been developing that is dramatically altering this traditional view of Public Relations and communication media. This revolution is represented in using the Internet, the massive global network of interconnected packet-switched computer network, which as a new communication medium has potential to change radically the way that organizations do business with their audiences. Internet is firmly established as a new Public Relations communication tool.

The rise of the Internet as a communication tool satisfies the demand for two-way, interactive, and symmetrical communication. The Internet has already become
an integrated part of communication and a routine element of the communication landscape. Nowadays, media means the more traditional media as well as new media such as the Internet. "Internet is by far the fastest growing communication medium" (Turban, et. al., 2004: p.23). Hence, "Internet is a medium for communication whose time has come" (Strauss& Frost, 1999: p.9). Hoffman & Novak observe the traditional media follow "a passive one-to-many communication model, whereby organizations provide content via a medium to a mass audiences with limited forms of feedback from the audiences. Now, Internet facilitates an interactive multimedia and two-way communication network, thus radically altering the way in which organizations can do business with audiences and suppliers. In two-way communication, Internet support discussion groups, multi-players games, chat, file transfer, e-mail and global information access and retrieval systems" (Hoffman & Novak, 1996: p.52). Therefore, "the Internet has become established as a global channel through which both existing and potential audiences can be targeted" (Melewar & Smith, 2003: p.363).

In the field of Public Relations, the growth of the new technology has altered the way in which corporations carry out Public Relations. According to the results of this study, Public Relations practitioners in Yemen are using the Internet when they carry out their Public Relations activities such as E-mail sending, Information searching, Media contacts, Research and Employee communication.

There is a recognition by practitioners that the Internet has the capacity of leveling the playing field between large and small organizations. There is some
recognition that individuals and groups opposed to one's organization can use new media technology to significantly affect public perception about the organization.

Internet reviews new ways of applying each of the elements of the communication mix. Today, Internet, as a Public Relations tool, is something that organizations must consider because it's the least expensive communication tool as well as the most cost-effective. Internet offers a new additional applications to inform audiences of benefits of a product or service with full-color virtual catalogues, provide on-screen, offer online support and to elicit audience feedback. "Public Relations tactics permeate most Websites and many e-mail communication programs (Strauss & Frost, 1999: p.9)". That is to say, Internet applications become extremely important avenues for organizations to interact with their audiences.

Indeed, the Internet may be a place for previously unrelated publics to come together for a social or activist cause. Cozier and Witmer (2001: p.622) argued that the Internet provides a place for new types of publics, "which emerge because people who are on-line interact with others and influence each other's meaning systems". Such relationships suggest new challenges to the roles and practices of traditional public relations.

On other hand, Current Public Relations an emerging science discipline and argue that research is in need of developing concrete measurement tools which will allow empirical evaluation and clearly identify its driving forces (Lages & Simkin, 2003: p.298).
The result is similar to that of the study conducted in the United States in 1998 (Wright, 1998). The study conducted by Wright showed that Public Relations practitioners in the United States use the Internet mainly for monitoring the news, information seeking, research, E-mail sending and press release. There is a difference, however, with regard to the use of the Internet as monitoring the news, competitor monitoring, or media contact tool between Yemen and the United States. Practitioners in the United States use the Internet more frequently when they carry out monitoring the news and competitor monitoring than Yemen Public Relations practitioners do, and practitioners in Yemen using Media contacts and employee communication via the Internet more than their counterparts in the United States (Appendix 5-A).

The study’s central objective was to examine Yemen Public Relations practitioners’ perception about the Internet as a Public Relations tool. As previously mentioned, the results of this study showed that Public Relations practitioners using the Internet to communicate via e-mail, search for information, Media contacts, Research, Employee communication and distribute press releases.

With respect to the impact of the Internet on the media relations, most of the respondents indicated that existing media such as newspapers and broadcasting are less effective than the Internet on media relations. The results also suggested that Yemeni Public Relations professionals believe that the Internet has been interacted with the media more efficient. These results weaken (decline) the previous findings that journalists and Public Relations practitioners prefer direct communication rather than indirect communication such as computer-mediated communication (Eichholz,
Public Relations practitioners prefer using online media such as e-mail or Web sites as superior tools compared with face-to-face contact with journalists.

This study also examined the relationship between the degree of Internet use as a Public Relations tool and the expected model of Public Relations practiced in Yemen. Because the Internet is regarded as a two-way, interactive communication form, this study examined the effect of the Internet's interactivity on the model of Public Relations. The results of this study suggest that the two-way Public Relations model such as the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical model is favored by practitioners. This reinforces Sriramesh study's finding. According to Sriramesh, Kim and Takasaki, Public Relations practitioners aspire to practice two-way Public Relations model (Sriramesh, et. al., 1999).

The results also showed the degree of Internet use had a positive impact on the two-way model. In other words, the more the Internet was used as a Public Relations tool, the more the model of the Public Relations was likely to be a two-way Public Relations model. In addition, the result of this study indicated the public contact activity was more positively related to the two-way model of Public Relations than any other Public Relations activities on the Internet.

As mentioned above, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Internet is its unique interactive feature. The common characteristics of interactivity reflect mutual relational interactions between the message provider and the recipient. These characteristics of the Internet have transformed Public Relations practices.
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The impact of the interactivity on relationship-building will likely continue to increase (Wu, 1999). The results suggest that the unique features of the Internet play an important role in building relationships between the organization and the public. The two-way model of Public Relations emphasizes keeping relations based on mutual understanding and collaboration. The results of this study show that more and more practitioners have recognized the efficiency of the two-way Public Relations model. It is anticipated that an increasing number of Public Relations practitioners will carry out their roles based on a two-way, or professional, Public Relations model.

One of the practical implications of this study is that Public Relations practitioners need to take into account public-oriented Web content which facilitates building a positive relationship with a variety of public. In detail, practitioners should make their corporate homepage a powerful tool of two-way communication for monitoring what others are saying about the corporations, rather than simply posting one-way promotional features.

Constructing a model of dialogic Public Relations and theorizing about the World Wide Web in Public Relations context are two of the most important areas for researchers to explore. The Web offers something unique in mediated organization-public communication: an unobstructed path between publics and organizations. The Web also allows both small and large organizations access to many of the tools of modern Public Relations.

On the other hand, the Internet is a global medium through which communication with people all over the world is possible, because the Internet crosses different cultural and language barriers. Therefore, Public Relations practitioners can
reach various kinds of public regardless of their nationality and residence. Given this, practitioners can take advantage of the Internet as a Public Relations tool to contact foreign public and should consider format and contents appropriate to this possibility.

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions

There are several aspects of this study that may need further examination. Because the sampling list was not comprehensive, there is a little basis for generalization of the outcomes to all Public Relations practitioners in Yemen. Without an exhaustive list of Public Relations practitioners, it is difficult to conduct a survey with generalizing results. It is necessary to interpret the results with care when making generalizations.

This study used 14 items borrowed from the Sriramesh study to assess the Public Relations models in Korea. In Sriramesh’s survey (Sriramesh, 1991), positive models (practical models) and normative ones (desirable models) of Public Relations practices were mixed (Kim & Hon, 1998: pp.156-166). Therefore, it is suggested that further research would use two sets of questions about the four models, tapping into both positive and normative perceptions. By doing so, actual practice and the desired standard would be measured.

Moreover, specific Public Relations practices in Yemen, such as the personal influence model and the considerable influence of the business system, were not considered in this study. As an exploratory study regarding the relations between the degree of Internet use and the Public Relations models, this study was limited to the application of existing theories such as Grunig’s four models for describing the status
of Public Relations in Yemen. In subsequent studies, Yemeni Public Relations models that can explain and represent unique practices and guide the development of Public Relations need to be utilized. For example, it would be valuable to study the Internet effect on the personal influence model.

The Internet as a representative interactive medium suggests a number of future research topics. According to the results of a previous study in Korea (Park & Kim, 1997), when Public Relations practitioners were asked to list critical factors for the most effective Public Relations, they specified understanding by management of Public Relations. Dominant coalitions play a crucial role in determining strategic Public Relations decisions in an organization. In other words, the perception of a dominant coalition significantly affects the understanding of Public Relations. In this context, additional research might be focused on dominant coalitions in an organization to identify the management's perspective about the Internet as a Public Relations tool.

Finally, because most Public Relations practitioners regard media relations as one of the most important roles according to earlier study (Kim & Hon, 1998), it would be worthwhile to study the perceptions of journalists toward Public Relations on the Internet.

5.3 Implications for theory

The purpose of this study was to gain better understanding of how is the current state of the Internet's impact on Public Relation's performance as a communication medium within NOG in Yemen. This study has to some extent been exploratory since
we have gained a better understanding of the area of research through gathering information.

This thesis has contributed to theory in terms of a broader understanding of Public Relations activities within the NOG. When looking at existing theories and compare these to the collected empirical data, some deviations can be found. This has contributed to theory and strengthens the fact that the term Public Relations is vast and hard to define due to its various definitions and roles. The general understanding of Public Relations is "publicity in media," instead of the broader definitions stated by theories. Therefore it could be better to define Public Relations in general as corporate communication; this could reduce the problem with defining Public Relations. This thesis also contributes to theory and confirms that there is no general method of evaluating effectiveness in Public Relations activities in the NGO; instead it is obvious that different ways can be successful.
5.4 Implications and Recommendations

Conclusions that have been drawn in the previous section finally bring this thesis to an end. In this section implications for various fields where this study can be useful will be presented. These are implications for practitioners and management, as well as ideas for theory and future research.

5.5 Implications for further research

The empirical findings from case studies (NGOs) can be a basis for further research within the field of Public Relations. During the work with this thesis, issues and questions related to the research questions have arisen. Time limitation prevented us to answer all the questions and issues. Therefore we recommend further research within the field of Public Relations in the following lines.

- Due to time limitations, only NGOs could be conducted, it would be interesting to perform the same study with a larger sample from other organizations. In this way, it could be possible to generalize the outcomes in a different way.

- It would also be interesting to conduct the same study in other organizations/industries/companies. The specific characteristics of different organizations would give varying data in the same research area.

- Specific parts of this study could be explored with further depth with a wider sample selection.

- It would also be interesting to conduct the same research internationally; in other countries internally, or in comparing across borders, to be able to identify differences that are brought up by cultural diversity.
- Research on how specific public perceive NGOs' Public Relations efforts would also be interesting to do. The study could be conducted from the public point of view.

- It would be interesting to conduct a study to find the overall Public Relations practices across various government organizations in Yemen and then compare its findings with what have been resulted by the current study.

- It would be worthwhile to study the perceptions of Journalists/Media professionals towards Public Relations using Internet as a tool of Information and communication technology (ICT).

- It would be so interesting if this study is going to be a practical reference over the topic of “Electronic Government” which becomes an important factor in communicating with the public.

5.6 The observations on Internet revolution for Public Relations in Yemen

After 48 years of the invention of household electric power, to wire American home, and seven years later the World Wide Web (www) was created and homes were connected to the Internet. It is necessary to set up a search engine in the developing countries like Yemen by taking the following steps.

1. Developed a web spider a software program to browse the Internet.

2. Instruct the Spider to begin its ‘web-screw’ at popular websites, building an index of the words of the pages

3. Follow the links on the site so that the spider will quickly spread out across much of the web.
4. Build up an index of search words found by the spider and encode and store the data for users to access.

5. Develop search engine a software program to sift through the millions of entries in your index and rank them in order of relevance.

Moreover, there are additional remarks such as:

1. Contribution and status of men and women is almost on par (equal - 56:44)

2. The age group of respondents is between 30 to 39 years who were graduates and diploma holders.

3. A major portion of population (41.2%) works in the field of Public Relations, communications or media at the high level of organizational management.

4. The period of Internet use was 2 years or more.

5. Internet has improved two way communication between organization and public (employee communication)

6. Internet has the greatest strength as a Public Relation tool in respect of degree of Internet use, Internet use field and management of web-site (Public Relations activity)

7. Use of Internet has improved.
   a. Investor/donor relations.
   b. Media relations
   c. Affordable research

8. Various dimensions of Public Relations activity with the Internet are:
a. E-mail sending
b. Information sending
c. Media contacts
d. Research
e. Employee Communications
f. News monitoring
g. Professional associations contacts.
h. Investor/donor contacts.
i. Recruitment of Public Relations employees
j. Customer public contacts
k. Crisis management
l. Competitor monitoring
m. Government contacts.

5.7 Conclusions

Even though there often is an exaggerated belief in traditional Public Relations today we can see that the view of traditional Public Relations has changed. The Public Relations practitioners are aware of the need to use Internet as a communication tool. Public Relations form of one-way communication and the consumers are skeptical towards this form of communication and are even to some extent ignoring it. However, The Public Relations practitioners are proclaiming a more targeted communication and finding other ways to communicate via Internet. In short, the Public Relations practitioners are aware of importance of using Internet as new Public Relations tool.