

Understanding Communication through Public Diplomacy

Sponsor: Public Relations Division

Sun, 11/22: 8:00 AM - 9:15 AM

Rio Conference Center

Room: Miranda 4

This panel aims to address the converging points between the emerging field of public diplomacy and public relations. This paper session will also evaluate the application of public diplomacy practice to public relations theories in attempts to improve the work of practitioners. The panel hopes to bring forth an innovative approach in interpreting corporate and state communications by drawing on the experience of state and non-state actors' communication.

Chair

Gregory Payne, Emerson College - [Contact Me](#)

Respondent

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Public Relations Division

Presentations

Channeling for Public Diplomacy

Public relations theories offer practical insights for governmental communication, which is one of the reasons public diplomacy research can benefit from the public relations literature. Scholars have tested the conceptual and theoretical connections between the two fields and argued that public relations and public diplomacy use similar tools to seek comparable objectives (Fitzpatrick et al. 2013, Signitzer and Coombs, 1992). We argue that much more can be learned from public relations theories to improve public diplomacy practices. In

this paper we try to utilize the issues management theory in public relations to examine governments' issues advocacy and management practice. In particular, the paper examines how countries manage issues on public health and infectious diseases through building international networks and how such a process benefit them in achieving public diplomacy objectives. The cases examined in this study lie at the intersection of public relations and public diplomacy. Governments manage issues by connecting with foreign and domestic actors such as governments, international organizations, private organizations, and individuals. These networks in turn advance the government's public diplomacy in the long run. The paper not only aims to bridge the two fields but also employs social network perspective and analysis as theoretical and methodological framework to further understand the landscapes of public relations and public diplomacy.

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Corporate Social Responsibility and Global Good: Public Diplomacy Strategies for Public Relations Practice

Businesses strive to establish credibility and consolidate their brand through public relations practice. The corporate brand is communicated by way of rigorous public relations initiatives that have the end goal to create a positive reputation, image as well as generate economic interest. Public relations history rests upon numerous cases of corporate social responsibility since the early 20th century. Similarly, governments seek to wield power, expand their sphere of influence and generate foreign policy outcomes. In order to establish this end result, governments employ strategies that go beyond public relations. Similar to corporations; governments purvey their brand and credibility but they do so through public diplomacy practice. Ideally, public diplomacy seeks to build bridges between cultures and establish relations. Governments employ hard power elements such as monetary incentives besides elements of soft power such as culture. Global social responsibility initiatives such as humanitarian and development aid drives are just a fraction of these public diplomacy practices focusing on global good. Although government and corporate social responsibility have numerous functional

similarities, governments pursue a more engaging two-way communication, thus yielding to a different communication strategy. Governments, advocate issues such as global governance, democracy, ending poverty, income and gender inequality. They may achieve some of these ambitions while pressing for global recognition. This paper seeks to uncover the converging points between corporate social responsibility and government global responsibility. It aims to do so in the light of humanitarian assistance and the notion of global good. The paper will also seek to draw public diplomacy lessons for corporate public relations practice.

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Embracing Opportunities and Maximizing Profit:How Non-State Actors Capitalize On The State's Public Diplomacy

The soft-power approach to public diplomacy is arguably a superior and more ethical way of communication with foreign publics due to its non-coercive means (Fitzpatrick, 2013). However, because soft power is found inside and outside of the public sector, soft power maybe a property of both state and non-state actors, such as universities, religious and cultural organizations, sport teams, businesses, corporations and brands (Roselle et al., 2014). These non-state actors can become potential elements of a soft power strategy for public diplomacy when directed toward national objectives.

At the same time, non-state actors attempt to capitalize on the state's public diplomacy commitments and maximize their profits by aligning their values and key messages with the state's key messages, thus creating a consensus. This study proposes to call it grassroots public diplomacy initiated and driven by the needs of the global and local communities (as opposed to strategic public diplomacy initiated and funded by the government). The grassroots public diplomacy thrives when the needs of communities overlap with foreign policies of the advocate country. Under the guises of the corporate social responsibility, corporations and brands attune their public relations and marketing strategies to act in unison with the country's public diplomacy messages and, therefore, indirectly contribute to the state's public diplomacy and foreign policy goals. Such unprompted "public diplomacy" activities are not always defined as public diplomacy, yet they become essential elements of the soft power approach.

Using the example of Starbucks and their "responsibility to advocate both internal and public policies that support the health of our

business, our partners (employees) and the communities" (Starbucks, 2015), this study examines how Starbucks attuned their corporate social responsibility strategy to one of the main U.S. foreign policy goals that is to promote human rights and democracy in the world. The study argues that Starbucks brought about change to local communities by instilling shared values and commitment "to support and uphold the provision of basic human rights and to eliminate discriminatory practices." In so doing, Starbucks capitalized on the opportunity to expand their market and to maximize their profit, while simultaneously contributing to the achievement of the U.S. foreign policy goals.

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How Public Diplomacy Blew Fresh Air into the Field of Public Relations

As international trade and direct foreign investments have grown rapidly since mid-20th century, new forms of business-related communication have been developed and recognized as institutions, including economic public diplomacy, commercial public diplomacy, and corporate public diplomacy. Scholars have discussed how to distinguish between these familiar concepts (e.g. Asquer, 2012; Macnamara, 2011; Ordeix-Rigo & Duarte, 2009).

The diplomacy related communication fields have roots in public relations, but each of them is unique in several ways, including logic of origin, cultural perspective, and relationship to news media. While existing research suggest that public relations is used by corporations in their effort to claim legitimacy (Vos 2011), this article suggests that economic & commercial public diplomacy help them conquer the world, and corporate public diplomacy is used in governance.

As a consequence of the development public relations practitioners have integrated diplomatic techniques into their toolkits, including tools to build and maintain long term, trusting, and general relationships with all stakeholders.

Since corporate communication now reaches the world in an instance, public relations practitioners further more have developed skills to analyze international relations and understand international cultural symbols to an extend that was not normal when public relations practices were first developed a century ago (Vos 2011). These skills also belong to the fields of diplomacy and international relations.

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Power and Politics: Understanding Public Relations through Public Diplomacy

This paper looks at the relationship between public diplomacy and foreign policy with the objective of contributing to public relations theory and practice. Public diplomacy is generally used as an umbrella concept to cover various projects nation-states use to communicate with general publics beyond their borders. It is undeniable that public relations theories have been influential in both the study and practice of public diplomacy. The concept was even labeled public relations for nation-states. During the last couple of decades, we witnessed a drastic increase in the number of countries investing in public diplomacy projects, helping public diplomacy become an accepted component of international politics. Thus, 'public relations for nation-states' was brought into the power-calculation based international politics. Especially with the rise of soft and smart power concepts, public diplomacy was used in conjunction with balance of power and power projection understandings. Nation-states included public diplomacy in their foreign policy toolkit and employed communication projects to help achieve foreign policy goals. Through a process-tracing approach, this paper unfolds the mechanism through which public diplomacy projects contribute to the advancement of national interests and applies the lessons drawn to Gruning's models of public relations. The findings of this research demonstrate the link between public relations and public relations. Additionally, the power-based approach in international relations is used to expand public relations models.

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