

Marketing Public Relations (MPR): The Unbelievable Integrated Marketing Communication

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ABSTRACT

There is a variety of communication tools. One of the most popular and effective is actually Public Relations (PR). Nowadays, PR is not only managed by the internal influence, an organization, but the marketing perspective and consumer-orientation also power PR execution. Many companies are employing marketing public relations (MPR) which can lead the organization to outstanding achievement and effectiveness.

บทคัดย่อ

หากกล่าวถึงเครื่องมือทางการสื่อสารแล้ว เครื่องมือหนึ่งที่ได้รับคามนิยมและมีประสิทธิภาพ คือ การประชาสัมพันธ์ อย่างไรก็ตาม ในปัจจุบันการประชาสัมพันธ์ไม่ได้ขึ้นอยู่กับปัจจัยภายในองค์กรเพียงอย่างเดียว หากแต่เกี่ยวข้องกับแนวคิดเรื่องการตลาด นั่นคือ การคำนึงถึงผู้บริโภคได้เข้ามามีส่วนกำหนดการดำเนินงานทางการประชาสัมพันธ์ขององค์กรด้วย ซึ่งมีหลายองค์การที่นำการประชาสัมพันธ์เชิงการตลาดมาใช้ และสามารถก่อให้เกิดความสำเร็จและความมีประสิทธิภาพในการดำเนินงาน

INTRODUCTION

We are all accustomed to the word Public Relations, shortly PR. It is the management function playing dual vital roles; to maintain and to build goodwill and good relationships between an organization and the publics. It was normal to use PR solely, without any help of other communication tools.

But today, due to the influence of globalization, PR not only plays the management tool, but also acts as the marketing tool. That is to say, it is more concerned with the consumer's needs and wants.

MEANING

In the perspective of marketing, PR is also known as Integrated Marketing Communication, or briefly IMC. There may be a familiarity with specialized people, such as communication scholars, advertising agencies, students who are studying marketing and communication and so forth. In contrast, IMC, for

some, is likely to be novel matter. Hence, the explanation of the term "Integrated Marketing Communication" is briefly given before addressing Marketing Public Relations. So far, I would like to divide the word "Integrated Marketing Communication" into clear three individual words; integration, marketing, and communication.

Integration

Integration is straightforwardly said an attempt to homogeneity or homogenization of several different-styled things into only one similar or integrated thing. In the prospective of marketing, therefore, either communicators or marketing managers provide facilitation to consumers by showing messages in an integrated way; a variety of messages written, spoken or released, but conveying the same core theme. This is to respond to the different needs and wants of different consumers via the marketing mix including advertising, sales promotion, sponsorship, point of purchase communications, exhibitions and trade fairs, direct marketing communications, personal selling, interactive marketing, and, unforgettable, public relations. Those tools will be talked later. However, it is said that when a coherent message meets the consumer or is perceived by the customer, integration happens (Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2001: p.8).

Marketing

In terms of marketing, there are many scholars and practitioners who give us some enlightenment on defining the terminology of marketing. Overall, all meanings shown below are very similar to each other.

"Marketing is concerned with creating and sustaining mutually satisfying exchanges of value between producer/servers and their customers. It has both a managerial orientation and an organizational/social function" (Varey, 2002: p.4).

"Marketing is a total system of business activities designed to plan, price, promote, and distribute want-satisfying products to target markets in order to achieve organizational objectives" (Etzel *et al.*, 2001: p.6).

"Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create and exchange value, and satisfy individual and organisational objectives" (Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2001: p. 2).

Therefore, from the three meanings above and other relevant terminologies, marketing is concerned with the following key words:

- Planning process
- Consumer-oriented
- 4Ps: product, price, place, promotion
- Valued exchange between target markets and an organization
- Satisfying those needs and wants and objectives

In conclusion, marketing is the planning practice of consumer-oriented and valued-exchange management concerning 4Ps consisting of product, price, place, and promotion to respond to the purpose of mutual satisfaction of people's needs and wants and objectives. However, I would like to explain briefly more about 4Ps:

Product: This includes daily products, convenient products, service and so forth. Due to the globalization, individuals have their own desire and facets, even in a same product category. For example, X encounters dandruff, while dry hair is threatening Y. As is clear two persons show a discrepancy of problems. Thus, a shampoo producer has to create shampoos with ingredients that deal with these problems.

Price: With the shampoos being produced, price is another factor that the producer has to think of carefully. Shampoo is a low-involvement product,¹ in terms of the quality of the ingredients, class of the target audience, as well as is affordable, the production costs are reasonable; and meets the required profit and the consumer needs.

Place: Concerning the place of distribution, a marketer needs to storm his brain to allocate suitable places to reach the target group. Places relating to distribution are: wholesalers, retailers, and intermediaries.

Promotion: There are two important strategies the push strategy and the pull strategy, in order to gain the consumer's cooperation. The push strategy is a technique by which a marketer convinces the resellers to order or buy products through the channel of distribution so that the resellers can make a profit. For example, using the technique of the incentive, giving a gift when buying more, and so on. The consumer is attracted to the product through the service from the retailer, via promotional tools such as coupons, sweepstakes, rebates, and free samples, known as the pull strategy in the form of advertising.

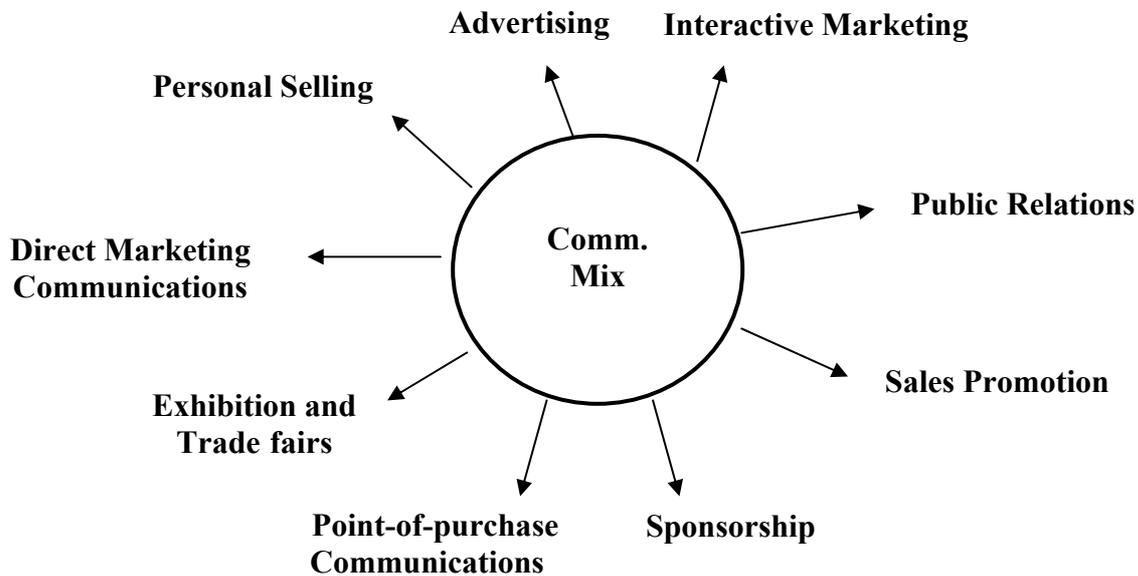
Communication

Basically, communication of the instant cored message goes through both one-way and two-way communication.² Thus, I would like to circumscribe the form of each communication that may normally be used in the marketing perspective, these are: advertising, sales promotion, sponsorship, point-of-purchase communications, exhibitions and trade fairs, direct marketing communications, personal selling, interactive marketing, even public relations. Each has different advantages and disadvantages as well as its own natural characteristics.

¹ Generally, there are two types of marketing products, so-called high-involvement products and low-involvement products. In terms of high-involvement products, the decision making process is really long because the consumer needs to spend much money and no one in a family can decide on his own, however, they may discuss with their family' members. Such high products, for instance, relate to elegant cars, houses, computers, and other extravagant products. In contrast a low-involvement product does not need sophisticated thinking and also does not cost much. Shampoo, detergents, clothes, stationery are examples of low-involvement products.

² Fundamentally, one-way and two-way communications are two kinds of communication. There is no interactive feed back in one-way communication. One-way communication is in the form of self-thinking, while in two-way communication, people are in the position of sender and can receive a reaction of the opposite counterpart, the receiver; conversely, the receiver can give a reaction to the sender as in a circle. Types of two-way communication are advertising, public relations, personal selling and so forth.

Figure 1: The Communication Mix



Advertising is a paid-form of communication publicized through the mass media (such as TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, etc.) and identified with a specific sponsorship.

Sales Promotion is a marketing technique to easily achieve the goal; better sale, such as price cuts, couponing, competitions, free samples, etc.

Sponsorship means that an organization, in the position of a sponsor, provides funds, goods, and instructions to both its own event, and the company holding the event. There are many benefits, for instance, building brand awareness or stimulating the brand or corporate image of the donating organization.

Point-of-purchase communications are the ways to display products at the points of purchase.

Exhibitions and trade fairs are a kind of business-to-business and industrial contacts with prospective, users and purchasers.

Direct marketing communications are personal and direct contacts with customers, clients or prospects via brochures, leaflets, direct mailing, direct response advertising etc.

Personal selling is a way of contacting between company representative and customer by presenting a product and/or service through oral communication.

Interactive marketing is a more convenient and comfortable method provided to consumers in this globalization era. The consumer and the company can interactively communicate, even from their own office via new channels like the Internet and extranet. People might call it e-commerce.

Public Relations, eventually, is another communication mix with the high goal to build knowledge, create goodwill, and correct misunderstanding in order

to maintain beneficial mutual relationships between an organization and the publics.

In conclusion, IMC uses a variety of a completely synergized communication mix (advertising, public relations, personal selling etc.) for the purpose of communicating an integrated and consistent message in response to the consumer's needs and wants, providing later on achievement of the goals of the corporation.

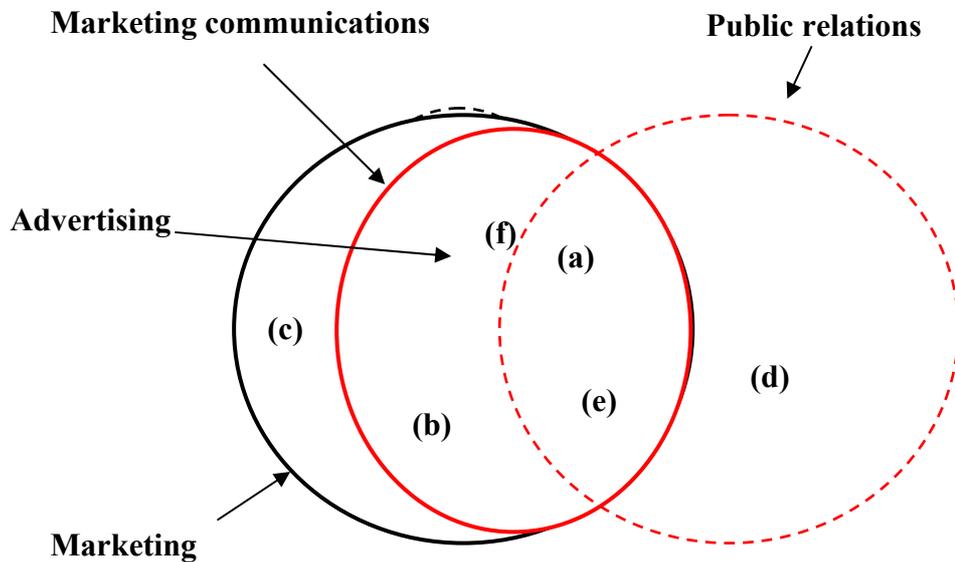
Next, IMC details could be briefly discussed, thus, only one communication mix that is becoming more popular in the today's world: public relations, is explained.

MARKETING PUBLIC RELATION (MPR)

As it is said above, PR is a more and more efficient and effective way of IMC. In this part, the PR-involved marketing diagram, reasons developing MPR, differences between PR and MPR as well as types of MPR will be encircled. First of all, how PR is linked in the marketing perspective is being identified in the following picture (Figure 2) (Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2001: p. 9).

In the past, PR was not mentioned entirely in the marketing prospect. PR was to serve the organization only. That is to say, PR is used to be utilized for supporting the organization-driven need; to build and maintain its reputation and good attitude with the publics, without being concerned with the public's viewpoint. PR tools that have been used consist of press release, poster, leaflet, brochure, bulletin board and so forth. However, the discrepancies between previous PR and its innovative counterpart, in terms of marketing are also illustrated.

Figure 2: The picture explains how PR is related to marketing
(Pelsmacker *et al.*, 2001: p. 9)



- (a) Corporate advertising
- (b) Salesforce and channel communications, trade shows, packaging, direct marketing, sales promotions, etc.
- (c) Distribution, logistics, pricing, new-product development, etc.
- (d) Investor relations; community relations; employee communications; public affairs/government relations; most media relations; crisis communications and corporate identity; executive communications; charitable contributions, etc.
- (e) Product publicity; brochures and other collateral materials; parts of media relations, crisis communications and corporate identity; sponsorship, etc.
- (f) Traditional mass-media advertising

Conclusively, as it can be seen from the picture, partial PR is a fragment of all factors of marketing, marketing communications, and advertising. In consideration of the relations, first of all, in the biggest ring of marketing, PR needs to think more about consumer-orientation in terms of creating a product, pricing, placing, and the distribution channel. In the part of marketing communications, PR is focused on marketing materials, especially publicity in order to send a consistent message to the different consumers. Likewise, in the circle of advertising, it is considered as corporate advertising, i.e. a form of advertising is used to support the corporation for the purpose of building its image and creating a good relationship between the company and its public. On the other hand, PR itself purely presents investor relations; community relations; employee communica-

tions; public affairs/government relations; most media relations; crisis communications and corporate identity; executive communications; and charitable contributions, etc. That is to say, the roles of PR officers are to build the relationships with both people, internal and external.

In the marketing context of the today's world, the hand of PR is utilized to synergize the disadvantages of other tools. It can be said that PR can successfully work by itself, without any helping hand of the other marketing communication mix, but, without PR, marketing cannot be neatly and successfully performed.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS

Because of the development from pure PR to MPR, there are slight differences in terms of tool, techniques, and concepts. More explanations can give better understanding.

"Public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip *et al.*, 2000: p.6). In other words, PR officers have to seek a way how to establish and maintain relationships between an organization and the publics according to the organization-driven concept. MPR, on the contrary, PR follows the marketing function, i.e. it brings the concept of consumer-orientation. Corporate performance is up to the consumer's thinking and attitude. Furthermore, the previous PR mostly focused on the internal such as officers and employees. At present,

it is not only internal, but also external, as customers, suppliers, and distributors are being developed. In the same time, PR publicity used old techniques containing bulletins, newsletters, and annual reports. However, techniques are new more up-to-date and sophisticated. Now, on the other hand, there is a mixture of varied media as mentioned above. Finally, only the PR strategy had been used to achieve its own goal, without the consideration of the public needs and wants. As with the concept of the marketing strategy, the newer PR socially responds to our physical and social needs, which are beneficial to the adjustment and maintenance of the social system (Goldman, 1984).

REASONS OF DEVELOPING MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS

There are many reasons why MPR is becoming more popular. Initially, advertising rates in the media of TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, as well as the new medium like the Internet are largely increasing. As a result of this problem, the marketer, even the media planner, needs to implement cost effectiveness and efficiency in order to establish goodwill and to sell his product and/or service. That is to say, PR is a form of non-paid communication, thus, the marketer can save money as much as he can. After monitoring, the result of the PR execution might be equivalent to paying for media time and place. Secondly, there is the factor of media fragmentation. In terms of magazines, in Thailand, it is divided into men, women, sport lovers, pet lovers, businessmen, and travellers. So, it is difficult to monitor the achievement of only a single marketing communication tool. Furthermore, because of the higher level of audience communications literacy, people select to buy goods more rationally and logically. The consumer needs more supportive information to decide whether they should buy or not. Attitudes also are being swung all the time; as a result, negative attitudes might be superseded by the positive attitudes toward a specific matter.

TYPES OF MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS

There are two types of MPR consisting of proactive and reactive. They are regarded as a cycle, i.e. the proactive strategy is required to act first, and the reactive will be performed later. However, they are explained in more detail as follows:

1. Proactive: The technique that influences the company's strengths through long-term marketing objectives and policy, i.e. the marketer tries to release the company's benefits and its products or services in order to achieve its goal; gain the highest sale and good image and the highest revenue. This type of this PR strategy is "offensive rather than defensive, opportunity-seeking rather than problem-solving, and proactive rather than reactive" (Goldman, 1984: p.xi). In other words, for this PR form, the marketer tries to seek the opportunity that is influenced by

internal factors such as its reputation, reliability, and life-long history, instead of dealing with problems. At the same time, the marketer pushes such opportunities to support and publicize the matters that the company wants. As a result, the output of this type will be positive.

The process of this PR form, like PR process, consists of decision making, planning and programming. The company makes a decision which opportunity is offered, then, it is planned how to use that chance to meet the required goal, what medium/media should be used to carry the message, and what kind of event should be created, and eventually communicated to the consumers. However, all of them are foreseeable, if not entirely controllable.

To conclude, the proactive technique provides the company with how to do it, but not what to do.

2. Reactive: Unlike the proactive, the reactive seeks to find a solution to solve a problem that is regarded as weaknesses of the company. As a consequence, the company want to defend itself and get rid of all of the facets that threaten the company, with the purpose of restoring the company's reputation, preventing market erosion, and regaining lost sales.

For this method, the company needs to concern itself with both how to do and what to do. That is to say, in terms of how to do, which channel and media as well as event should be used; on the other hand, which performance to use and what is to be done (Goldman, 1984).

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS

In general, MPR provides both benefits and drawbacks as follows. In terms of advantages, first of all, MPR can effectively and efficiently create credibility by supporting other marketing communication tools, because information released through the hand of PR is based on facts and rationality even though it is positively publicized. Unlike only a power of advertising, for instance, some advertisers use different techniques such as half-truth telling and exaggeration only for the purpose of selling goods. As a consequence, the organization is more reliable and gains more positive opinion and attitude as well as distributes correct knowledge among the public. Apart from giving a good point for its own organization, its products are also granted at the same time.

In a favour of visibility and reach, it means there is a high ability of the consumer's reach and awareness. There are several reasons to support such opinion. Due to very expensive advertising rates, many companies invest a lot of money. However, MPR can save such bulk budget and sometimes advertising can also be replaced by the influence of MPR. Also, nowadays, the company is encountered with the problem of advertising clutter. To avoid gaining costlessly, MPR is another technique to

provide feedback and reaction as high as advertising does. However, MPR execution is displayed by the brand position and brand personality.

Today, it seems that there is the limitation of cost expense. Many corporations need to keep their expenditure as low as they can and also think carefully about cost efficiency and effectiveness. MPR can take that responsibility because, in terms of MPR, there is low, and sometimes no cost of expenditure. Sometimes, the business is able to ask the media to release its news and to expand the time frequency, if it has good media relations. As a result, it can be modified to any kind of business including governmental, private and non-governmental organizations.

Although MPR could offer many advantages, there is the limitation of media control. Unlike the advertising, MPR is powered by the influence of the media. That is to say, the satisfaction of time and space as well as news contents are confined by the hand of media, while, in terms of advertising, the company can control such issues by itself.

Consequently, it seems that MPR is more advantageous than disadvantageous. However, in some cases, the company needs to realize the MPR drawbacks before making decisions.

CONSIDERATIONS OF MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS

Overall, MPR considerations are similar to the previous PR, there are more issues than pure PR. The BrandAge Magazine (Year 3, Issued 11) provides 10 considerations of MPR.

1. MPR Planning and Management: The company has to plan the following factors; who is the target consumer; what are MPR strategies needed to be used; what are MPR objectives, what is the procedure of MPR; and what are the goals. Without planning and management, it can bring complications and failure to the company.

2. Media Relations: Can provide more convenience and comfort to the business in terms of the organization's publicizing. Success and failure of the organization partly depends on media relations. Thus, many companies arrange media activities such as media visits and media parties.

3. Producing Publicity: The main vital role of MPR is to release PR news to the media. Positively, the organization's news and information including policy, activity, and performance are spread; as a consequence, the public obtains more knowledge and shows a more optimistic attitude towards the organization. In the same time, it can prevent rumours, in case of a crisis that threatens the organization.

4. Producing Publications: There are two kinds of publications: internal and external. The internal publications, for instance, bulletins and newsletter are normally given to internal officers. Conversely, the external counterparts, for example, leaflets, posters,

brochures, and news releases are suitable to the community, media, stakeholders, and the public.

5. Corporate Communications: The company needs to consider how to manage and communicate to internal and external people.

6. Lobbying: Is relevant to the community and media relations for the purpose of creating goodwill and easy negotiation in the future.

7. Crisis Management: In an emergency case, an incredible crisis, for example, a plane crash or an underground collision. To control such a radical issue, a contingency plan is required.

8. Research and Analysis: Is the process of finding facts and analyzing data in order to precisely support, evaluate, and control the execution.

9. Marketing Public Relations Audience: Knowledge and realization toward the target consumer. However, an opinion leader can facilitate more convenience and comfort.

10. Implementing Marketing Public Relations: MPR consists of many activities, thus, in order to achieve the expected goals, the company has to create synergized MPR activities.

CONCLUSION

There are all of the concepts of MPR that have become more popular among communications scholars nowadays. It is likely difficult to implement MPR; therefore, marketing and PR knowledge background and experience are very necessary to achieve the specific goals. However, MPR is regarded as the useful hand that is able to support the organizational performance and increase the corporate's product and/or service sales.

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