



UNIT-2

Concept of Public Relations, Advertising, Publicity, and Public Opinion

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Explain the difference between Public Relations , Advertising and Publicity
- ✓ Explore the objectives of Public Relations, Advertising and Publicity.

Unit 2

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Introduction

Communication is a multidisciplinary concept used by communication professionals to tackle complex issues in a dynamic and highly competitive world. The professional craft their messages to appeal to specific audiences to achieve specific objectives.

The previous unit introduced you to the definition of PR. We also defined terms such as the public', 'corporate communication', and 'public affairs' and how these concepts relate to the function of PR. This present unit will build on the previous one by elaborating on additional PR concepts such as advertising, propaganda, and publicity and expand on the role of these extra concepts in PR practice.

Definitions

Communication involves the three main concepts of advertising, publicity, and PR. These three differ in form but are similar in function; that is, all use the famous communication theory (figure 2.1) which involves a sender composing messages, then sending the message to a recipient via a suitable medium and the recipient decoding the message in order to understand the content; It also involves the sender receiving feedback messages from the recipient to help optimize future preparation of messages.

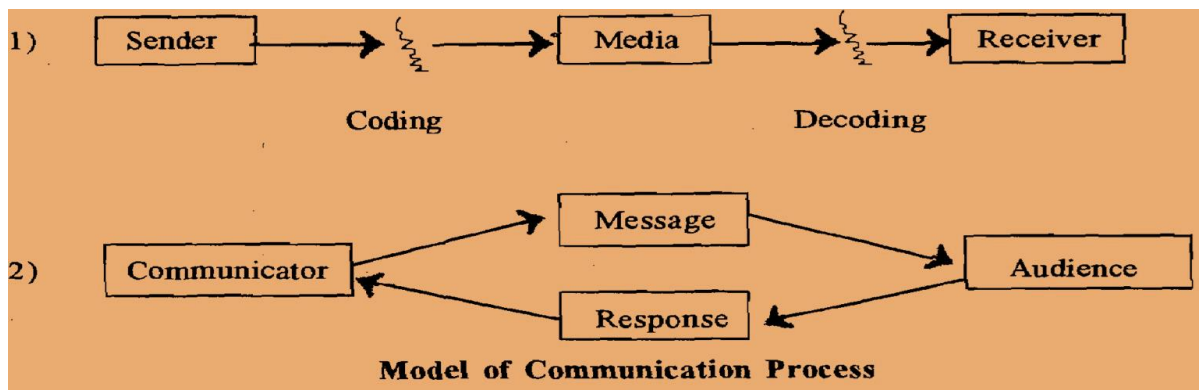


Fig: 2.1

The goal of advertising, publicity and PR is to add value to ideas or concepts by identifying their most important features which would interest people. Using advertising, publicity and PR to engage with the public is essential to keep the public informed about various issues of interest to them.

It is important to differentiate PR from publicity, propaganda and advertising. PR is not advertising, propaganda or publicity. On the contrary, these three may form part of professional PR practice besides, PR requires a high element of persuasion. Publicity is meant to promote the image of an organisation and bring recognition to it while advertising is done to enhance the sales of products and services. PR goes a step further than publicity and advertising because it makes use of a wider range of communication tools.

Advertising

Most standard textbooks tend to define advertising as follows:

“Advertising is communicating with and influencing someone to do something-to buy a product or service or something to think about”.

According to the Britannica Encyclopaedia, advertisement is “any paid form announcement intending to promote the sale of commodity or service, to advance an idea or to bring about some other effect desired by the advertiser.”

Advertising involves sponsors paying for goods and services to be promoted via several communication channels such as TV, radio, or billboards. To advertise means to pay for an idea or product or service to be communicated to a specific audience to influence and keep them interested in what is being advertised.

The purpose of advertising is to:

- Persuade people to buy a product or service; or take an action or think about something
- Announce a new product or service, or an idea / concept
- Announce a modification (price, ingredient, feature, packaging, special offer, etc.)
- Challenge competition (in terms of message or proposition)
- Maintain sales, retrieve lost sales or enter new markets
- Educate the public
- Recruit staff
- Announce a sponsorship

Individuals or organisations undertake advertising to build and maintain their brand image and give value to their products and services. Advertising can be classified into two categories: as product advertising or as institutional advertising (also known as Public Relations Advertising).

Product advertising is self-explanatory. It involves promoting a particular product for the public to purchase. Institutional advertising on the other hand has to do with enhancing the image or reputation of an institution to win the public’s affinity, favour, or goodwill towards the institution. Having a good image in the eyes of the public can translate into indirect benefit of increased sales due to the good reputation of producing quality products.

Publicity

Publicity involves having products or services featured in newspapers or non-commercial programmes on TV or radio without paying for it. The feature article to be produced on the company's profile, products or services is prepared by a journalist on their own volition or at the behest of the company who have something to announce on the 'special' product or service which they believe may be of interest to the public. Publicity is mainly used as a tactical tool to a great extent by PR consultants to achieve specific objectives. It lends itself to being a very credible tool because, it is perceived as originating from the media house and not the company, therefore the messages are widely accepted. In-depth skill is required to reap full benefit from publicity campaigns otherwise it may do more damage than good when not properly applied. This means that messages should be well-worded, factual, and truthful and not portrayed in a manner as to be perceived as an advertisement.

Public Relations

Using PR requires having good knowledge of psychology to persuade the public by deploying elements of publicity, advertising and any other useful communication. According to the British Institute of Public Relations (IPR), PR can be defined as:

"The planned effort to establish and improve the degree of mutual understanding between an organisation, or individual, and any group of persons or organisations, with the primary object of assisting that organisation or individual to deserve, acquire and retain a good reputation".

Advertising or publicity is characterised by sending messages in one direction using adverts or commercials to win more customers whereas PR is a two-way communication tool. The key ingredient for a successful PR activity lies in obtaining feedback for every message sent out to the target public.

Differences and Similarities in Public Relations, Advertising and Publicity

The basic difference between PR, advertising, and publicity include differences based on:

- The objective of the communication
- The physical nature or character of the message
- The effect of the message

Similarities between PR, advertising, and publicity are mainly found in:

- The media used for communication
- The elements used to create the message

We will now elaborate on these differences and similarities below:

Advertising

As an example, let us assume that we want to advertise a brand of premium toilet soap to consumers. We can analyse specific components of advertising elements to use in order to achieve a high impact and conversion rates.

The Objectives

- 1) To sell the brand (e.g. Liril/Lux/Cinthol) to the target consumers.
- 2) To achieve repeat purchase.
- 3) To achieve specified and targeted sales of the brand and profit for the company,

Message Communication (What message do you want to send?)

We wish to communicate messages consumers and make them aware of the availability of the brand of premium toilet soap on the market, or any particular brand of product or services and their benefits to the consumers. Ultimately, the advert would aim at winning brand loyalty of the consumers. This will of course depend on what consumers want and also on competition from other vendors of similar product.

Target Group: (To whom?)

- i. Women who earn higher incomes
- ii. Women who are modern, sophisticated and show more care about their personal hygiene and skin complexion
- iii. Women who have the money to afford high quality products

Communication Media: (Where to advertise?)

Communication can be in the mass media such as:

- The press
- The TV
- The cinema
- The radio

Timing of Activity: (When?)

Advertising should be done throughout the year or periodically broadcast in strategic manner for good effect. The extent of advertising usually depends on availability of resources as well as prevailing market conditions.

Development of Message: (How?)

Effective advertising campaign could be developed with the help of experience or market research before releasing to target publics in existing or potential markets.

Publicity

We will use similar analysis presented under advertising to explain how to go about publicity campaigns but in this case we will use financial issue in place of a product.

Objectives

- To announce special features of financial issue
- To create awareness and obtain feedback on the financial issue
- To provide specific details and facts about the issue
- To advice potential investors on what action to take with respect to the issue
- To build organisations' image

Message Communication: (What?)

Information on the financial issue should be delivered in such as manner and with facts that will solicit quack responses from investors. The message must be conveyed as if the source is the press or media. The message may include information on the company's history, aims, and objectives, growth plans and its financial outlook.

Messages may also include the following:

- 1) Potential investors.
- 2) Present shareholder and investors.
- 3) Company employee.
- 4) Government.
- 5) Media (specially the financial press)
- 6) Financial analysts.

Communication Media: (How?).

One mode of communication is to deliver the publicity via business news on TV. Another is to make use of financial columns in magazines and newspapers. Other techniques used for publicity include:

- 1) Press relations / hand-outs and press conferences,
- 2) Direct mail shots/ folders,
- 3) Investor conferences,
- 4) Video films,
- 5) Annual reports.

Time of activity: (When?)

It is best to start publicity activities before issue is released in the media and also after the issue has been published. Before announcing the issue, a corporate advertising campaign is done to build the company's

image. However, if resources are not sufficient to undertake corporate advertising, then press releases to magazines and newspapers can be done to get the message across.

Development of Message: (Where?)

The key to successful crafting of messages is having the right talent and experience. The best source of expertise is obtained from the services of people who work at advertising agencies or PR advertising departments of companies. It is critical to note the publicity campaigns are continuous processes and should be done for a sustained duration.

Public Relations

This section highlights how to practically use PR to solve an internal crisis such as a strike in an organisation (e.g. at a factory).

Objectives

- To resolve disputes through a two-way communication and provide the right conditions for negotiation
- To bring the strike action to a close

Message Communication: (What?)

The message sent to help resolve a crisis such as a strike should be designed to encourage mutual confidence between the employer and the employees. The message should also identify areas of mutual benefits to the two parties to enable positive dialogue to resolve the problem by considering the demands from both sections while working to arrive to an amicable solution.

Target Group: (To whom?)

- Workers
- Union leaders
- Employees and management personnel
- Outsiders (the customers, suppliers, media etc.)

Communication Media: (How?)

- Messages may be delivered using notice boards
- Publishing in house journal
- Deploying news sheet, posters and banners
- Video magazines
- Press releases in case communication need to reach extern parties as well
- Exchange of letters and facts dealing with the problem
- Personal meetings between the union and management

Time of Activity: (When?)

Prompt communication should be initiated when issues such as strikes occur. The negotiators should establish and maintain an open channel of communication for the duration of the strike and long after the issues have been resolved to win the confidence of all parties concerned, especially the employees and external groups. In short, the principle is to provide the right response at the right time in highly-charge situations like a strike.

Development of Message: (Where?)

Messages must be crafted to reflect the objectives and must also be suitable for the media to be used to communicate. In other words, the message should have the right tone and voice and should also accurately report the facts of the situation. A well-planned PR campaign should achieve a high impact and be capable of resolving this delicate issue people undertaking a strike action by bridging any existing communication gaps between the concerned parties internally within the organisation as well as externally between the organisation and the public.

Objectives of Public Relations, Advertising and Publicity

Successful advertising and publicity in PR is driven by the goals or specific objectives of the PR campaign. The main objectives of advertising are two:

- For marketing purposes
- As a tool to persuade

Advertising as a marketing tool is used to sell products and services to consumers by highlighting the benefits and different pricing schemes. It can also be used as mass persuasion tool during elections or in education to effect attitudinal and behavioural changes. Due to these features of advertising, it is often described as “controlled, identifiable information and persuasion by means of mass media”.

Advertising is an art and science used in the media to achieve specific goals and requires crafting messages in unique ways depending on the nature of the receiving target group.

The main objective of publicity is to send messages about an issue, brand or product via suitable media. The message being sent must be truthful, factual, newsworthy, and credible, and it should be so crafted in such a way as if the source of the message is the media. A successful publicity effort requires excellent knowledge of mass media, editorial policies, and insight of the nature of the target group. In order to achieve favourable results, there should be adequate planning, good write – ups, and excellent media relations.

With respect to Public Relations, the main objectives depend on the dynamics of situations for which a PR programme has been deployed because different situations require different PR objectives. PR consists of a combination of advertising and publicity and deals with changing perceptions, image, behaviour or knowledge of a target audience or group. It is highly dependent on the type of audience (or

public), the peculiar situation and timing. For example, a company experiencing internal issues with regards to employees would have to adopt different PR programmes depending on the nature of the issue. Another example is when dealing with crisis and launching a new factory; both of these activities will require two different PR objectives or goals when working with the media.

PR, unlike advertising and publicity, usually involves more than one target groups. In certain situations, many stakeholders such as the government, the press and employees become the target group while advertising and publicity may involve just one category of people mentioned above, usually large in size, depending on the situation prevailing.

Public Relations Advertising in the Press

When advertising is used for PR, it is referred to as institutional advertising and can be used as a valuable tool to accomplish several objectives of PR. Institutional advertising is not a marketing tool as is the case for product advertising which seeks to boost sales volumes of products but instead, it is meant to promote the brand of a company and to build a corporate image to put the company in a good light and make the public more favourable towards the company's business. Institutional advertising promotes good PR between major stakeholders (press, government) and the company and creates friendly atmosphere for business to flourish and make the company more profitable.

The objectives of Public Relations advertising is to:

- Improve the image of the company
- Facilitate a change in behaviour or attitude towards the company or its products
- Highlight the company's achievements to enhance its image
- Educate the public about how the company operates and improve upon its reputation by showing the public that it is a responsible corporate partner
- Establish a good reputation for the company in order to attract new talent
- Provide a uniform approach to market products indirectly

It is important to first of all identify the target group which will receive the institutional advertising message, as this is central to the success of the whole programme. Messages to be delivered by PR advertising should be simple and clear with just one concept (or idea) for great effect. If more than one concept will be deployed, then it should be put in the form of series advertisement spread over a period. When using series advertisement, do provide some sort of "inter-connecting link" between the episodes in order to reinforce the effectiveness of the first episode with the subsequent ones. Due to institutional advertising being expensive, it should be used wisely and sparingly.

Avoid complex messages or detailed explanation as much as you can. Alternatively, these complex messages can be presented in brochures or books for PR campaigns with more details available to the reader.

Public Relations Advertising on TV

Television can also be used as a powerful medium for institutional advertising campaigns to promote brand image through securing 'spots' or via sponsored programs.

Public Relations Advertising on Radio

Creatively designed sponsored programmes can win the attention of listeners and assist in image building and making products famous. Some of the best ways to achieve these objectives include making use of entertainment programs, sports programs or popular film programs which command high percentage of listeners.

Effective Public Relations, Advertising and Publicity

Adequate planning is needed to effectively compensate for the high cost of resources required to undertake communication programmes in terms of publicity, advertising and PR. Planning usually involves 7 key steps as follows:

i. Objective orientation

This step requires having a pre-defined and long term objective which must be agreed on and approved by the management.

ii. Target group orientation

Clearly identifying the target group without any ambiguity

iii. Message selection

The right message should be based on the objectives and communicated to the right target group using the most suitable medium.

iv. Media selection

The most suitable media should be chosen to reach the right audience at the right time and at the lowest cost.

v. Creativity and innovations

The messages have to be creative and attractive for them to be noticed to improve your chances of achieving your objectives.

vi. Adequate resources

Adequate provision of financial resources should be made available for a sustained campaign in the media. This is usually one of the biggest challenges in advertising and PR.

vii. Manpower backup

There is the need to secure the services of professional personnel to achieve the highest quality results.

Publication

We may define a public as a collection of people who share the similar interests and opinion on a topic. One expert (Kuppuswamy) described public as “a spontaneous collection of people in response to a certain kind of situation.” The public is usually made up of a variety of different groups or members and are united by a specific topic or issue. It has no geographical boundary or specific size.

We also need to understand the term “opinion.” According to Webster’s colligate dictionary, opinion is “a view, judgement or appraisal formed in the mind about a particular matter.” Opinion is more powerful than “impression” but less or compared to positive knowledge.

Definition of Public Opinion

Public opinion can be defined as the views or thoughts of member of the public about a topic or subject which appear to be controversial. Public opinion finds its root in controversial matters or disputes or debate on a subject matter about which members appear to form a view, whether in support of an opinion or against it. The group’s opinion is usually based on interpretation of values, norms or doctrines of each group member. In the end, whatever opinion is formed must be representative of the entire group or a significant number of the members of the group.

Forming Opinions

PR involves sampling, measuring, analysing and influencing public opinion by understanding the reason people adopt certain attitudes which influence how they form opinions. By attitude, we mean how people feel towards other people or organisations, whether that feeling is good or bad. Expressing an attitude is to form an opinion. Communication can be used to change attitude by influencing people to adopt new belief systems or by appealing to their emotions. You may appeal to the economic, social or physical needs of the public to change their attitudes.

How is Public Opinion Formed?

Attitudes are specific to individuals who can form opinions. Groups cannot form an opinion. Public opinion is created when individual opinions interact whenever people come together. Each member influences the process of forming public opinion by expressing their own opinions. There are many other sources which also influence the opinion of a group including books, magazines, TV, as well as, team leaders. The individual’s needs, emotions, culture and status in life may also influence public opinion of the whole group of individuals.

Propaganda, Public Opinion and Public Relations

It is important to bear in mind that PR is not propaganda and this should be understood right from the beginning of every PR programme. Propaganda is an opinion formed by a person to influence others to take an action for a specific cause. Due to its use during wars to cause hatred and fear, it has rather unfortunately acquired a negative connotation. Some people even use it to suppress facts, to brainwash and carrying out acts of barbarity. Although some critics choose to identify PR as a form of propaganda since it seeks to influence public opinion, it must be noted that there is a vast difference between the methods used in PR and in propaganda. PR requires honesty, facts and good performance to enhance the image of a company and it is not intended to mislead the public in any way and it employs two-way communication channels.

Propaganda can be identified by the following characteristics:

- The use of words, which have double meanings
- Appeal to people's prejudices and causing negative emotions, such as fear and hatred
- Suppression of facts, evading the truth and distortions
- Provocation and magnifying trivial issues
- Presenting one-sided arguments
- Incessant repetition

Public Opinion Research in Communication and Public Relations

How effective a communication programme is can be determined by four important steps:

- The right selection
- The right motivation
- The right evaluation
- Training and development

There is the need to first select the right message, followed by identification of the main motivation of the programme, understanding what constitutes the right target group whom you want to influence, and then, evaluating the result of the communication programme in terms of success and failures which is facilitated by adequate feedback mechanisms for future optimisation of the programme.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *A Modern Guide to Public Relations: Unveiling the Mystery of PR: Including: Content Marketing, SEO, Social Media & PR Best Practices, (2021), By Amy Rosenberg*
- ✓ *Public Relations, (2016), By Edward L. Bernays*