

Advertising and Public Relations. An Analytical Approach

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Abstract

This paper explores the complementary roles of advertising and public relations in shaping public perception, promoting products, and fostering long-term relationships with stakeholders. Advertising, a paid communication method, delivers persuasive messages through various media channels to induce immediate consumer actions, while public relations focuses on building trust and maintaining a positive organizational image over time. Despite their overlapping objectives, advertising and public relations remain distinct in their strategies and functions. The paper highlights the strengths and limitations of each, from the high costs and limited selectivity in advertising to the reliance on media outlets for public relations dissemination. When combined, these tools offer a more cohesive and strategic approach to business communication, enhancing engagement with diverse audiences. This integrated strategy balances short-term action with long-term credibility, positioning

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1. Introduction

In today's dynamic business environment, effective communication plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception and influencing consumer behavior. Both advertising and public relations (PR) are powerful tools employed by organizations to build their brand, promote products, and engage with stakeholders. While advertising focuses on delivering persuasive messages through various media channels to induce specific actions, such as purchasing a product or adopting a service, PR fosters long-term relationships by creating a positive image and building trust with the public. Over the years, the lines between advertising and public relations have become increasingly blurred, with both disciplines often working hand in hand to achieve common objectives. However, despite their complementary nature, the two fields remain distinct in their approach, strategies, and functions. Advertising is a paid form of communication, carefully crafted to capture immediate attention and drive specific consumer actions, whereas public relations is a broader,

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more strategic effort aimed at cultivating a favorable image and managing the reputation of an organization over time (Belch & Belch, 2021; Fill & Turnbull, 2019; Grunig, 1992; Smith, 2017).

The purpose of this paper is to offer an analytical approach to both advertising and public relations, highlighting the key concepts, techniques, and limitations that define each field. By exploring their individual characteristics, as well as the synergies that emerge when they are used together, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these communication tools shape organizational success in the modern marketplace.

2. Advertising

Advertising is a medium that uses symbols and constructions (specific language and codes) to convey persuasive and informative messages about a product, brand, idea, service, or individual, creating connotations and influencing behavior by stimulating the potential customers' emotions, feelings, desires and dreams (Danciu, 2014; Emodi, 2011; Ilieș, 2008; Pride & Ferrell, 2009; Simionca, 2012). Advertising should use well-defined concepts and typologies that are strategically placed from an emotional point of view, so that to be positively evaluated by consumers (Simionca, 2012). Advertising utilizes various impersonal channels (diverse range of traditional and digital platforms, such as magazines, newspapers, direct mail, radio, television, the Internet, and outdoor platforms), which act as a link between the consumer and the sellers of goods and services (Pride & Ferrell, 2009) (Figure 1). Impersonal channels of communication are used to transmit written, visual, auditory, or a combination of messages directly to audiences. Simply put, media encompasses the methods of communicating with large groups of people across cities, communities, or countries through the written or printed word, sound, voice, visual images, or a combination of these elements (Arya, 2023).

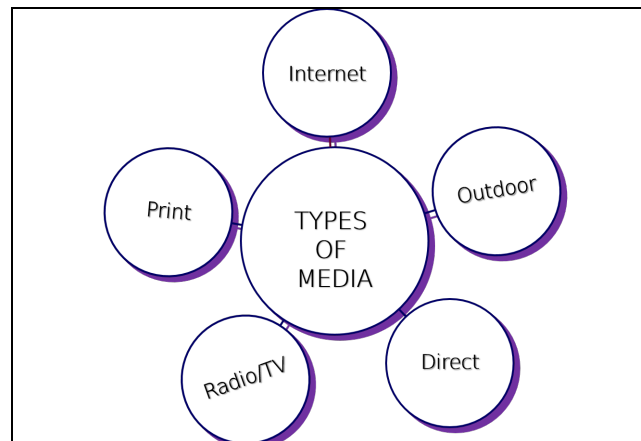


Figure 1. Impersonal channels through the advertiser conveys his message to target segment

Source: Authors, by using (Arya, 2023)

In advertising, words are carefully chosen to create something unique, surprising and memorable, to the purpose of having the greatest impact on the public (Lipša, 2013). Verbal elements (as tools for creating an image) are vectors of significant messages, which is why the vocabulary must be carefully chosen in order to trigger positive associations in the perception of the target consumer's perception. The text should be clear, fluent, and coherent (ensuring unity and emphasis). The vocabulary should be skillfully chosen to draw attention and be easily understood (Emodi, 2011; Simionca, 2012; Stoica et al., 2017). Sentence length and the number of syllables in words influence text comprehension. Short words and verbs with few syllables facilitate understanding (e.g. read, talk, new, old, little, come, see, can, win) (Emodi, 2011; Simionca, 2012; Lipša, 2013). Word choice, word order and the use of denotative and connotative meanings are critical in advertising. Inaccurate lexical choices can only vaguely or partially convey meaning (Emodi, 2011). Sentences should be simple, intelligent, and sometimes amusing, while omitting unnecessary link words, though they must still be grammatically correct (Lipša, 2013). Nouns are more concise than adjectives, and while each word has a main meaning, it can also carry connotations (such as perfection, power, notability) that stimulate specific associations (Emodi, 2011; Simionca, 2012). Adjectives, when used effectively, highlight the qualities or characteristics of the product and can generate positive feelings (Emodi, 2011; Lipša, 2013). Rhetoric elements are used to help advertising achieve its persuasive goals (Simionca, 2012). Poetic language is often used for special effects, incorporating numerous figures of speech, such as metaphors, stylistic superlatives, parallelisms, comparisons, litotes, synecdoche, and others (Abuczki, 2009; Chaysin, 2011; Dubovičienė & Skorupa, 2014; Emodi, 2011; Lin & Hsieh, 2011; Morris & Waldman, 2011; Simionca, 2012; Lipša, 2013; Te Vaarwerk et al., 2015).

Image in advertising is essential, as what may be seen is much more credible. Images in advertising are essential, as visuals are generally more credible than words. An image can be a mental figure (a representation of reality in the mind based on sensations or imagination), a photo (reproducing an object through an optical system), or a literary form (an artistic reflection of reality through words) (Simionca, 2012). Visual elements clarify information and are often more effective than language, as they can be understood by nearly anyone, regardless of ethnicity, age, or intellectual level. In advertising, text cannot be fully understood without images; the combination of the two achieves the desired effect. Images reinforce the text's message, and the text, in turn, influences the interpretation of images (Simionca, 2012; Dubovičienė & Skorupa, 2014).

Advertising also utilizes specific sound techniques, such as rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, consonance, and onomatopoeia. While sounds are more commonly associated with oral advertising (e.g., voice, accent, diction – all showcasing exceptional skills), many slogans employ sound strategies to capture attention and make the product more appealing (Simionca, 2012; Lipša, 2013; Dubovičienė & Skorupa, 2014). Rhyme, one of the most effective sound techniques used to introduce a brand name, refers to the way a word is pronounced

rather than written, making slogans and titles more striking and easier to remember. Alliteration, the repetition of consonants or syllables in successive words, creates a euphonious effect, heightening the listener's awareness of contrast. Assonance, the repetition of stressed vowels in two or more words, is less obvious in slogans, making it harder to identify. Consonance, the repetition of consonant sounds, generates a harmonious resonance. Alliteration, assonance, and consonance are intended to attract attention, emphasize meaning, and help slogans remain in the listener's memory for longer. Rhythm, the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, is perceived subconsciously and thus makes slogans more memorable. Onomatopoeia, a word created based on imitative sounds, suggests natural sounds, creating special effects and making the idea more expressive, engaging the listener's senses (Dubovičienė & Skorupa, 2014).

Advertising, while offering numerous advantages, also faces certain limitations that vary depending on the media used (magazines, newspapers, direct mail, radio, TV, Internet, outdoor). For instance, advertising in magazines offers demographic/geographic selectivity and a long life span, but it comes at a high cost and provides limited coverage. Newspapers, although widely read and geographically flexible, suffer from short life spans and limited reproduction quality, making them less ideal for long-term campaigns. Direct mail can be highly selective and measurable, but its effectiveness is often reduced due to its high cost and the risk of being discarded without reading. Radio advertising, which covers a broad audience and are relatively low-cost, faces challenges due to its short-lived nature and limited attention from listeners, who may be engaged in other activities while listening. Television advertising, though difficult to ignore and capable of reaching large audiences, is very expensive and suffers from uncertainty regarding the actual size of the audience and limited prime-time availability. The Internet, while offering the potential for precise targeting and immediate responses, is criticized for its high costs and challenges in accurately measuring its effects, as well as concerns over security and confidentiality. Outdoor advertising allows for frequent repetition and low cost but is limited by the need for short, simple messages and its lack of demographic selectivity, meaning it may not always reach the intended audience effectively. The media used for advertising presents its own set of limitations, from high costs and limited selectivity to challenges in maintaining consumer attention and ensuring the message reaches the desired audience (Pride & Ferrell, 2009).

3. Public relations

Public relations (PR), often mistaken for merely relating to the public (where public is an adjective, and the public is a noun), are similar in structure but different in meaning. PR serves as a bridge between an organization (e.g., power structures, administrative institutions, food manufacturing companies, commercial enterprises, cultural and sports institutions, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions, etc.) and external groups (the public/audience). It acts as a

means of communication both within the organization and between the organization and the public, managing the reputation and visibility of organization through different strategies (Coman, 2006; Ilieş, 2008; Komninos et al., 2015; Pride & Ferrell, 2009) (Figure 2).

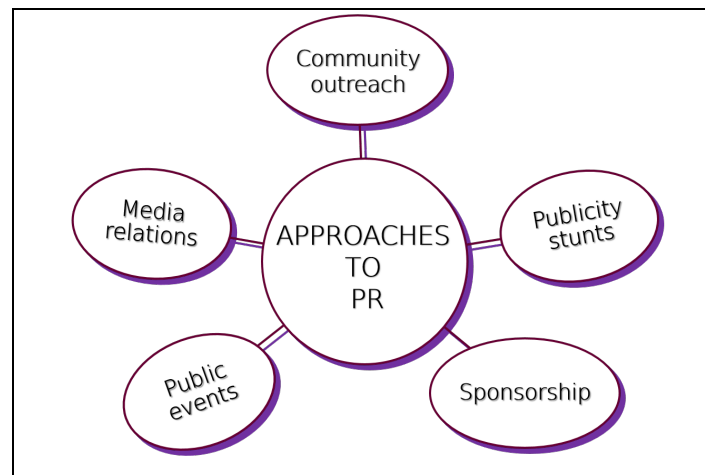


Figure 2. Public relations approaches
 Source: Author, by using (Eades, 2024)

PR specialists, whether in public relations agencies, corporate bodies within large economic groups, governmental organizations, non-profits, or consulting firms, require a well-defined strategic approach to build effective internal and external communication strategies for their organization (Coman, 2006). Generally, PR specialists handle various types of relations, such as employee relations (organizing events, newsletters, company publications, radio and TV programs, websites), press relations (preparing press releases, conferences, briefings, and training leaders to interact with journalists), community relations (maintaining contacts with local interest groups), customer relations (press releases, events, advertising campaigns, direct mail), investor relations (newsletters, annual reports, investor updates), and government relations (producing brochures, reports, and lobbying efforts). The public refers to any group whose members share an interest in a particular situation or hold common values (e.g., employees of an institution, managers of a corporation, members of a political party, fans of a band, exam applicants, customers, suppliers, consumers of a product, competitors, etc.), and who engage in some way with the life of the organization (Coman, 2006). PR and advertising work effectively together, yet they remain distinct functions with separate responsibilities (Ilieş, 2008; Komninos et al., 2015). While PR focuses on finding new ways to get the media to talk about an organization, product, service, cause, or event, advertising directly imposes its message. Although PR has a broader and more intensive communicative function than advertising, advertising plays an important role within PR efforts. Advertising delivers an organization's message through media channels to encourage the

purchase of products or services, while PR aims to build public trust through accurate, transparent communication, bringing the organization into the spotlight and fostering positive relationships (Ilieș, 2008; Pride & Ferrell, 2009).

Advertising is an integral part of PR. PR works to turn negative perceptions into positive ones, transforming hostility into sympathy, prejudice into acceptance, apathy into interest, and ignorance into knowledge. Historically, PR has been considered the stepchild of marketing, a later solution in planning promotional activities. Unlike marketing, which is transactional, PR focuses on building trust between the organization and its public (Ilieș, 2008). The public's perception of a company can directly influence sales, so maintaining a positive public image is essential. Furthermore, when the public holds a favorable view of the organization, employee morale improves (Pride & Ferrell, 2009). PR specialists are responsible for public communication programs, while marketing professionals manage market relations. Both PR and marketing should collaborate to create a social environment of confidence and trust (Ilieș, 2008).

Organizations use various PR tools to send messages and shape their image. PR professionals produce written materials, such as brochures, bulletins, magazines, press releases, websites, blogs, and annual reports, to reach and influence interested parties (customers, suppliers, employees, stakeholders, media, educators, potential investors, government officials, and society at large). PR specialists also develop corporate identity materials, such as logos, business cards, stationery, and other items that make companies immediately recognizable. Speeches are another PR tool, as public declarations at meetings or in the media can impact a company's image, making it essential for the speech to deliver the intended message clearly. Sponsorship events, where an organization partially or fully finances a special event (e.g., scientific conferences, benefit concerts, tennis tournaments), are also part of PR strategies. Through sponsorship, companies gain significant media coverage and ensure that both the product and the event resonate with a similar target audience. PR specialists often organize unique events to create newsworthy moments for their organization, such as grand openings featuring celebrities, prize giveaways, hot air balloon rides, or boat trips on the Danube (Pride & Ferrell, 2009). The most common PR tool is the press release (Komninos et al., 2015). Typically, a press release is a one-page document with fewer than 300 words describing an event or product of the organization. It includes the organization's name, address, phone number, and a contact person. A typical article manuscript for PR purposes may extend up to 3,000 words, prepared for specific publications. Additionally, generic photos with short captions explaining their content are often used to illustrate new or improved products with distinct features. Press conferences, designed to announce major events, invite media personnel who are typically provided with written materials, such as letters to the editor, photos, and audio or video recordings, which can be distributed in the hope of being broadcast. PR tools offer several advantages, such as high credibility, news value, and greater authenticity than advertising (Pride & Ferrell, 2009). Generally, PR is more cost-effective than advertising, communicates directly,

generates free publicity, is flexible (suitable for any audience category), and helps differentiate a company from its competitors.

PR is an essential tool for shaping an organization's image and fostering communication between an organization and its various publics (Coman, 2006; Ilieș, 2008; Komninos et al., 2015; Pride & Ferrell, 2009). However, PR tools have certain limitations that can affect their effectiveness. One of the key challenges is that PR personnel rely on the media to convey their messages, meaning that the organization does not have full control over how and when the message is presented. Media outlets may alter the content or reduce the length of press releases to suit their editorial needs, potentially leaving out important information that the company wishes to emphasize. Another limitation is timing. Although PR teams may encourage the media to release news at a specific time, the final decision rests with the media outlets. This lack of control can result in messages being published at times when the target audience may not be as receptive, reducing the potential impact of the communication. Additionally, media outlets have the power to place PR content in locations or sections where it may not reach the intended audience. For instance, an important announcement may be placed in a less visible section of a newspaper or aired during an inconvenient time on television or radio, thus failing to capture the attention of the desired demographic. Despite these limitations, when properly managed, PR can offer significant advantages, such as higher credibility and cost-effectiveness compared to advertising. It is crucial for organizations to regularly evaluate how well their messages are being conveyed and adjust their strategies to ensure they resonate with the target audience (Pride & Ferrell, 2009).

4. Conclusions

Advertising and public relations serve as fundamental pillars in the communication strategies of organizations, each contributing in unique ways to shaping public perception, promoting products, and building long-term relationships with stakeholders.

This paper has explored the distinct characteristics, techniques, and limitations of both fields, as well as the synergies that arise when they are used together to achieve common objectives. Advertising, with its ability to deliver carefully crafted messages through paid media, is a powerful tool for generating immediate consumer responses and driving product sales. However, its limitations, including high costs, limited selectivity, and challenges in audience engagement, make it essential for organizations to select the appropriate media and craft messages that resonate with their target audience. Additionally, the effectiveness of advertising depends heavily on the media used, with different channels offering varying levels of demographic and geographic selectivity, audience reach, and cost-efficiency. On the other hand, public relations offers a broader, more strategic approach to communication, focusing on building trust and maintaining a positive image over time. Public relation's flexibility, cost-effectiveness, and credibility

make it an invaluable tool for organizations seeking to foster long-term relationships with their publics. However, public relations also faces challenges, particularly in its reliance on media outlets for message dissemination, which can lead to a lack of control over timing, placement, and content presentation.

Despite these limitations, the integration of advertising and public relations can significantly enhance an organization's overall communication efforts. When used together, these tools create a more cohesive and comprehensive approach to reaching diverse audiences, influencing consumer behavior, and fostering positive relationships. While advertising drives immediate action and product awareness, public relations builds a foundation of trust and credibility, which is essential for sustained success in a competitive market. Both advertising and public relations are indispensable components of modern business communication strategies. Organizations must recognize the strengths and limitations of each tool and strategically combine them to maximize their impact. By doing so, they can navigate the complexities of the current business landscape and achieve long-term success through effective engagement with their stakeholders.

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