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Research Paper

An Empirical Study of Recent Trends in Public Relations

* **Amit Verma**, *Assistant Professor*
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
St. Wilfred's PG College, Jaipur
Email: amitve4@gmail.com, Mob.-9540746259

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Abstract

Public relations is a strategic communication process companies, individuals, and organizations use to build mutually beneficial relationships with the public. A public relations specialist drafts a specialized communication plan and uses media and other direct and indirect mediums to create and maintain a positive brand image and a strong relationship with the target audience. Public relations are simply communications processes between companies, organizations or individuals and the general public. PR experts try to establish and maintain relationships with an organization's target audience, all verticals of the media and opinion leaders. Through this study we would be able to analyze the present public relations trends in India.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Public Relations News "Public relations is a management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organization with the public interest, and execute a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance". However, a large section of the public fails to agree exactly on what public relations is all about? This discipline is a relatively new and emerging concept for which there is no full consensus on a precise definition. Public relations, also known as PR, can be simply understood as the communication process between companies, organizations or individuals and the general public. PR

specialists typically work to establish and maintain relationships with an organization's target audience, the media, relevant trade media, as well as other opinion leaders.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Moore & Kalupa** writers have stated that Public Relations is composed of four basic elements. First, it is social management philosophy, second, it is an expression of the philosophy in policy decisions, third, it is action resulting from these policies and fourth, it is two way communications that contributes towards the creation of these policies. The writers have made some official statements on Public Relations that define Public Relations as a management function.
- **Shrivastava** Social Media trends According to which Social Networking sites have reached 84% of the web audience in India, and take up 21% of all time spent online. Among the popular Social Networking Sites are Facebook, Instagram , Twitter, LinkedIn and Pinterest. Later on the writer states that the Public Relation in respect of new media is a new subject. Both the writers of the Chapter advocate the fact that Public Relations in new media both are very important aspects of media studies, are growing and do wonders when used jointly.
- **Theaker** In each part he discusses PR, strategic public relations, stakeholder's public relations, public sector public relations, consumer public relations etc. The writer describes the future of public relations in context of changing media and its impacts on PR operations. Following this the writer suggests that the increased speed of communications makes corporate reputations harder to manage, and because of increased access to information, transparency and immediacy of response are needed.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the role of new media in Public Relations.
2. To examine the role of social media in Public Relations.
3. To analyze the adaptability degree of modern PR by the companies.

1. Theoretical Perspective

Cognitive dissonance

Cognitive dissonance is a discomfort caused by holding conflicting ideas simultaneously. The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance. They do this by changing their attitudes, beliefs, and actions. Dissonance is also reduced by justifying, blaming, and denying. In a state of dissonance, people may feel surprise, dread, guilt, anger, or embarrassment. People are biased to think of their choices as correct, despite any contrary evidence. This bias gives dissonance theory its predictive power, shedding light on otherwise puzzling irrational and destructive behavior.

Media Dependency Theory

Theory was given in 1976 by Sandra Ball Rokeach and Melvin De Fleur. It says that there is an integral relationship between audience, media and society. The degree of dependence may vary from one user to another, when social changes are there or we have conflicts in society people's dependency on media increases.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUE

The study that has been done is pilot study and it is done by researchers itself. Case Study method is used to study trends.

LOCALE OF STUDY

For the purpose of study Rajasthan that deals with lifestyle, fashion and educational industry has been selected as the locale of study.

BROAD AREA OF RESEARCH

The major focus of the research is set to understand emerging trends of public relations in a variety of sectors.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Q1 Does website optimization is now necessary for building a better brand image?

Q2 Is the usage of new media has increased in PR strategies?

Q3 what are the benefits of including consistent blog posting in any PR strategy of a business?

Q4 How social media has changed PR?

Q5 Does PR and Content Marketing go hand in hand for business success?

Q6 Do you think influencer marketing is the next big thing in PR?

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this is to evaluate the recent trends in Public Relations and measure performance of companies in chosen locales in terms of digital public relations. This study will show the transition of public relations over the period of time and current face of public relations and how brands are maintaining their online public image. This is purely for increasing the knowledge regarding working of modern age public relations and how PR professionals are adapting this change. Case studies on three companies PR tools is the main feature of the study and by this we will have a better knowledge about the various components of modern public relations. Therefore, this finding may help in understanding the recent trends of public relations that brands are currently following in India.

Limitations of Study

Limitations of time, space and manpower are the most restrictive aspects in an empirical study and this study is also limited due to these aspects. This study could be done by the case study method.

PROFILE OF CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY ON JAIPUR RUGS

Jaipur Rugs is one of India's largest manufacturers of hand-knotted rugs. Headquartered in Jaipur, India founded by Nand Kishore Choudhary in 1978 with a core objective to nurture the creative capacity of India's artisans and empower them to fulfill their aspirations and live a dignified life. The company's operations span across 20+ branches, 6 states, and 600 villages in India with distribution to over 40 countries with its independent base of over 40,000 artisans spread across 600 rural Indian Villages in five states of India. Jaipur Rugs

now also known as Jaipur Living Inc has always remained top in the news stories for its award-winning rugs and for transforming the lives of thousands in rural India. Jaipur Rugs has always been into news since the time of its existence. The first time it got prominent news coverage was in September 1980, just two years after it came into existence in an English Magazine called Inside Outside.

Some of the most famous publications that featured it in their books and case studies are by distinguished professor C.K Prahalad, The fortune of the bottom of the pyramid (2009), G.P Rao, Humanizing management (2010), and Rashmi Bansal, Take me home (2014). The list doesn't end here, this globally acknowledged lifestyle and home decor brand managed to penetrate in some of the biggest and globally recognized magazines like Elle Decor, Grazia, The Asian Age , Vogue, Forbes India, India Today, CNBC, Architectural Digest, Outlook Business, Entrepreneur, and Interior Design to name a few.

Besides this, it regularly gets coverage in the print media and websites like Hindustan Times, The Times of India, DNA, Textile Excellence, Your Story and Inc24 etc. One of the most effective ways to build brand awareness, while providing relevant and useful content to your target audience is through consistent blogging. Jaipur Rugs is leveraging its blog page optimally by regularly posting write up on trending topics and occasions like 5 Reasons why Jaipur Rugs is a perfect gift on Christmas, and 7 Beautiful holiday decoration ideas for your home.

Social media is playing a significant role in marketing strategy of Jaipur Rugs and is actively present on Facebook (59k followers), Instagram (47.6k followers), YouTube (561 subscribers) , Pinterest and Twitter (3,263). Though the brand does not have a huge following on social media, it is still steadily growing up with an average +1350 followers monthly on

Instagram, has nearly 984 posts and the engagement rate is 0.63% which is a lower than the average Instagram engagement rate on any business account. Jaipur Rugs launched its Unstring a Story initiative early this year to celebrate the work of its Katwaris (spinners).

The initiative aims to revive the dying art of handmade carpet weaving. Described as a play of a million coloured threads, Unstring a Story celebrates human experience in design and weaving processes. The stories of artisans explore the different processes of carpet making such as weaving, stitching and embroidering. The initiative won recognition as the winner at the Digital Empowerment Foundation's awards in the "Social Commerce and Enterprise" category in 2017. Jaipur Rugs aims to put the spotlight on artisans through digital media.

In the modern age when mass production has made art impersonal, Jaipur Rugs tries to develop an emotional bond between the arts and its craftsmen with the buyer. Through stories of its artisans, Jaipur Rugs, an exporter of hand-knotted carpets aims to make its customers aware of the hard work that goes into rug manufacturing. The luxury rugs brand shares the stories of weavers and uses social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube and Instagram to narrate the real stories of weavers through pictures and videos.

Jaipur Rugs uses Google My Business, Google Ads, social media tools, and an e-commerce portal to drive sales. In 2016 Jaipur Rugs launched its E-commerce portal and has witnessed 4% increase in its sales through its website. From 2007 to 2015 Jaipur Rugs invested a lot of time and energy developing the website by adding a catalogue of products, user logins, better visuals of the products and detailed information about the company and its history. The right SEO strategy plays a crucial role in the brand success. According to the company's data 80% of its sales are influenced by communication and content consumed online. There has been a significant amount of increase in the website

traffic from 2019 with a major objective to raise awareness and drive traffic for that research takes place on the top search terms like Mother's Day, Valentine day, retail contests etc. and then the website is optimized by the way of relevant content either in the form of blogs or in the form of social media posts. Jaipur Rugs various campaigns are run on such events like earlier on Mother's day Jaipur Rugs held a contest where contestants had to submit images coupled with copy and a voting feature as integrated for people to vote on their favorite entry. Such campaigns are promoted along with specific CTA on the official Jaipur Rugs website. Data collected through the customized micro sites, landing pages and custom Facebook tab are used to contact directly to contest participants. To further engage participants and encourage sharing, contest-specific emails asked participants to increase their votes by getting their friends and family involved thereby generating greater brand awareness and more participation. Also special offer emails are also sent to all participants, driving traffic back to the site.

CASE STUDY ON BYJU'S

BYJU'S - The Learning App is the common brand name for Think and Learn Private Ltd., a Indian educational Technology (edtech) and online tutoring firm founded in 2011 by Byju Ravindran at Bengaluru (India). In March 2019, it was the world's most valued edtech company at \$5.4 billion. BYJU's brand management strategy majorly depends on modern PR and digital marketing. This learning app is now all set to enter in the global market and has partnered with US-based conglomerate The Walt Disney Co. The app will boast of characters from popular Disney brands such as Cars, Toys story and Frozen.

The partnership is in line with Byju's aspirations to expand beyond India into other large English-speaking markets such as the US, UK and Australia. Shah Rukh Khan is the brand

ambassador for BYJU'S and its advertisement featuring him is rated as the most spontaneously recalled celebrity advertisement. Partnership with Khan helps them to increase their reach & create deeper connections across geographies. His wide appeal and adoration amongst parents and children makes him a perfect fit for the brand. BYJU'S as an edtech brand has always stood out by its core philosophy of 'Making children fall in love with learning' since inception and all its campaigns are aligned with the same philosophy. In July 2019, BYJU's won the sponsorship rights for the Indian Cricket Team jersey, replacing its former sponsor OPPO. It spends 75-80% on advertising and has a strong following base on social media mainly on Facebook with over 1.3 million followers, on Instagram (75.2k) and on YouTube (1.06 million subscribers). Byju's on Instagram regularly posts educational, engaging and shareable content. Educational posts on Byju's Instagram account receive more than triple likes and comments as compared to non-education; content that company receives.

The film aims to highlight that children learn better when they love learning. The video throws light on how when learning gets integrated with technology, it can encourage and empower children to learn on their own. Within three days, the video has already clocked more than 2.3 million views on the brand's YouTube channel. It has also created some noise on the social media channels, where people are just wondering – How much VC funding did BYJU's get to afford Shah Rukh. Created by Lowe Lintas, the ad-campaign is centered on the concept that children learn better when they love learning. It also showcases how learning integrated with technology can encourage and empower children to learn on their own. The ad-campaign perfectly captures the excitement and enthusiasm that children feel when learning becomes easy and so much fun, that they perform it on stage.

Announcing the launch of this new ad-campaign, Byju Raveendran, Founder & CEO, BYJU'S – The Learning App said, "Children rarely use the word 'Love' and 'Learning'

together as learning has always been equated to pressure, stress and competition. We have always strongly believed that children learn better when they love what they learn. Our partnership with Shah Rukh Khan will help us increase our reach & create deeper connections across geographies. His wide appeal and adoration amongst parents and children makes him a perfect fit for our brand”.

Speaking about partnership, Bollywood actor and father Shah Rukh Khan mentioned, “I am very happy to be associated with BYJU’S and contribute towards the journey of transforming education. I am a big believer of quality education and have always looked out for attractive and engaging ways to teach my children. As a parent, I believe that if children are taught through a visual medium, they will learn better as smartphones and tablets have become their primary mode of content consumption. BYJU’S-The Learning App is truly a friendly and powerful tool for children that offer them a fun, easy and interactive way of learning.” The new ad-campaign is also an extension of the recent BYJU’S brand refresh initiative. It re-emphasizes how BYJU’S’ has been making learning fun, engaging and personalized for children across grades and geographies.

CASE STUDY ON RAW MANGO

Raw Mango is Indian clothing brand founded in 2008 by an average fashion designer Sanjay Garg who was born and brought up in a small town in Rajasthan. As a design house it continues to produce new conversations in textile, culture and politics through a range of saris, garments and objects. Created with karigars across Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, and Varanasi, Raw Mango's designates upon century-old skills, in pursuit of defining a new aesthetic vocabulary. Raw Mango has its running store in Mumbai, Bangalore, and Delhi. Raw Mango regularly gets a feature in India's largest and prominent

print and digital media platforms such as Dainik Bhaskar, The Hindi, the Indian Express, Indulge Express, Livemint, YourStory, Lifestyle Asia, Elle India, Grazia, India Today, Hindustan Times, Mid-Day, Asian Age, First Post etc.

Raw Mango has apparently managed to be part of India's most loving fashion brands and stands in the queue of popular brands along with the other sporting designers like Sabysachi and Anita Dongre. However, the 12 year old brand got trapped into controversy in 2019 due to running a campaign called "zone" in the midst of severe lockdown in Kashmir after enforcement of Article 370. It drew criticism for being "insensitive" and "exotifying" the region in such sensitive hours.

The post was taken down as it began drawing criticism, but not before screenshots of it were circulated. "Kashmir under lockdown for 60days and Indian fashion brand Raw Mango has gone ahead and released a collection featuring Kashmiri textile traditions and aesthetics. Their price range is in five figures. Am I missing something here? A user posted on Twitter, while another on Instagram slammed Raw Mango for propagating "neo orientalism", and yet another disapproved of their "profiting out of miseries of Kashmiri people". After receiving a thread of criticism on 4 October 2019 released a press note stating Raw Mango Thursday clarified that the photographs and the campaign were conceptualized well before 5th August, when the Modi Government scrapped Article 370 and put in effect a security lockdown. In fact, the release had been scheduled for 8 August, the statement added.

"In November 2017, our design team began to research and textile development for 'Zooni', a collection drawing from Kashmir...The shoot was executed over 5 days from June 27-July 2, 2019," the company posted on Instagram, adding it had recalled the release "amidst public sentiment on timing, and assumptions on intent". Keeping the unfortunate event

aside, in an age where the only beautiful imagery we can create is within the confines of our home, Raw Mango's latest S/S 20 campaign further highlights the notions of togetherness, celebrations, and intimacy. This luxury brand is super active on social media and has 150K likes on its Facebook page followed by 372K followers on Instagram, and about 151 subscribers on YouTube.

This is the most liked post of Raw Mango Instagram page with 5.68% engagement rate, which is more than the average rate on Instagram. Generally, all the social media posts of Raw Mango have a high engagement rate making it more reachable to the audience. Facebook and Instagram pages of Raw Mango play a significant role in image building of the brand and it successfully draws traffic towards the call to action. The brand cleverly inputs links on social media which brings a major proportion of engagement and along with this text and pictures grabs more eyeballs. The official website of Raw Mango on average seeks 14, 154 months organic visitors and is steadily growing from the month of Jan 2020. Raw Mango posts the latest photo-shoots images on social media however it has now started exploiting high quality user generated content and has made it a signature style to multiply its reach, build credibility and create brand awareness among its target audience.

MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Public Relations are often regarded as a somewhat recent profession, barely arising in the past few decades ago. Regardless, the truth is that PR dates back as far as the old civilization with Julius Caesar and Cleopatra as the earliest figures of PR in history. These practitioners had enjoyed an enormous PR victory without any involvement from the internet. Public Relations in its initial forms is all about press releases. But on the present day, it has now shortly renovated to encompass social media and new platforms to pick up the rapid changes in society. PR firms are consistently looking for new

ways to build connections with customers. Apparently, it looks like that PR has gained a complete transformation, its key elements-information, persuasion, and building trust and its roots remain intact.

PR is an important pillar for building effective business relationships. Academics have tracked public relations methodologies back to the old times. In the 21st century, brands counted on PR techniques to create awareness and defeat competitors. But today, we all are aware that the digital world is prominent for doing a business. Gone are days when traditional media ruled the roost. Modern form of PR or we can say digital PR includes more than solely applying legacy Public Relations strategies. Whereas on the other hand, new forms of public relations consist of a traditional media, attracting referral traffic, SEO, content marketing, and social media. Modern PR or Digital PR is a measurable outreach or a publicity effort to improve online presence by working with authority creators and publishers. Digital Public Relations is the use of digital and social technologies to manage the awareness and understanding, reputation and brand of a company or organization, through the purposeful influence of exposure via digital media. Digital Public Relations will use many of the typical digital marketing media in order to manage its reputation convincingly; again tools such as content marketing, permission marketing, and customer engagement are central to the public relations purpose. Tools will also be typical and will include social media approaches, blogs, websites as well as traditional media such as newspapers, television and magazines.

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*** Corresponding Author:**

Amit Verma, Assistant Professor
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
St. Wilfred's PG College, Jaipur
Email: amitve4@gmail.com, Mob.-9540746259