

Public Relation; Young Men's Public Organization

A Theoretical Explanation on How Young Men Establish Mutual Understanding Within Them and Create Reputation Among Other Publics Towards Their Sexual Relations Through Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This paper identifies three key public relations concepts in order to explore how young men create sexual relations and emotional literacies through digital media. The first concept to be examined is mutual understanding. This involves exploring the dynamics of interpersonal relationships in order to understand how young people express their identities and to establish their on- line communities. The second concept to be explored is reputation. In public relation theory, 'reputation' refers to how people perceive the quality of the organization. In this section, reputation is used as a means of understanding how young people build up their image in order to create connections with similar people, other young people and wider society. Finally, the third concept to be discussed is activism. Activism in public relations refers to organizations providing opportunities to public's voices without which they cannot create relationships with their stakeholders.

Keywords: Interactive Communication, Mutual Understanding, Public relation, Public Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

In this section, it reviews the literature of the aspects of public relations; 'mutual understanding' and 'reputation' (Arrow, 2008; CPRS, 2008; see also Harlow, 1976). How 'public to public' relations are conducted (Leitch and Motion, 2010, p.101) through interpersonal and relational communication (Kent, 2013, p.340) as a discursive 'two – way symmetric' public relations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig, 2013, pp. 289-291) in the age of digital media, and how public relations are used in the occurrences of activism and social transformation (Hodges & McGrath,2011, p. 104) on the grounds of 'public relations have for society' (L'Etang & Ihlen,2015. P. 94) based on the perspective of critical public relation theory (L'Etang et al.,2017; L'Etang, 2009, p. 7), will be reviewed. Public relations through social media, which is beyond the 'established functional approach' that does contribute to the well-being of the human society through the formation of 'public organization' (Coomb & Holladay, 2013, pp. 90-122), and a brief introduction to the Sri Lankan public relation practices will also be reviewed in this section of literature review.

2. PUBLIC RELATION

Public relation is defined as the communication management between the organization and public (Health, 2013, p. 680). Instead, according to J.Grunig and White (2013), public relation has no fixed definition, so that process of public relations could be changed from organization to another form of socio-cultural environment. In broadly defining on 'what is public relations'; positivist perspective explains public relations as what is involved in the real world practice on the organizational context, whilst normative perspective emphasizes on 'what should be public relation' on the visionary perception. For instance, in creating relationship and establishing understanding in public relations (Arrow, 2008; CPRS, 2008; Harlow, 1976), organization and its stakeholders (publics) could differently utilize the techniques and tools of communication on their requirements (J. Grunig and White, 2013, p. 32). However, modern public relations, which has been evolved through the use of critical theory contributes for the requirement of transforming societies through correct information and awareness, and it is called critical public relations (L'Etang, 2009, p. 7). In this instance, communication between and within the public has been focusing on a better social development through activism and social changes (Grunig and Kim, 2017, p. 8). As a result, J. Grunig and White show (2013, p. 52) that public relations contributes for the process of social change, particularly in solving public's problem, through disseminating information for a public debate. Thus, this has implication for exploring on how young men use social media to make a public discourse for changing their societies' perception on young men's sexual relations.

Furthermore, Guth & Marsh, (2012) identifies five elements in public relations as public relations as a management function, invloves two-way communication, is a planned activity, is a research based

social sciecne and is socially responsible. Adding to Guth & Marsh, (2012), Theaker, (2016) mentions through public relations the people are expected to play a constructive role in society. Thus digital media has empowered people so that they are no longer passive bystanders but make an active involvemnt and engagement in actively shaping the socity and changing the social perseptions (Nayyar, 2016).

Moreover, reputation is the ultimate result of the public relation practices (L'Etang,2009). According to the Oxford English Dictionary reputation can be defined as "the condition, quality or fact being highly regarded or esteemed." In other words, it's a conviction and an opinion one has about someone else. Abraham Lincoln said character is a tree and the reputation is its shadow. The shadow is what we think of the real tree. Thus as cited by Theaker, (2016), Public relations is both. It ensures the character is based on authenticity and the shadow to be an accurate portrayal. To such as degree, the young men who use digital media today use digital media as a platform where they can highlight important issues that might not get a lot of attention otherwise and give a voice to underrepresented groups and make sure the real shadow is being portrayed to the society.

Relationships make the reputation, and it is the magnet that attracts the people towards the image of a particular entity (see also Fombrum & van Riel, 2004). Public's attention towards an organization makes the reputation just as a perception of impression (see also Barnett et al., 2006). For an example, Brown et al. (2006) suggest that what do others actually perceive about us is depicted by the reputation. Similarly, value of relationships creates the value of reputation (see also Coombs, 2000). In other words, quality of relationships make the reputation (L.Grunig, J. Grunig & Dozier, 2002). Thus, the fact that corporate reputation, which is made as a result of the process of public relation (Bronn, 2010, p. 310), could be used to understand how young men create reputation towards them and their sexual relations through social media.

3. CRITICAL PUBLIC RELATION THEORY

In the Internet age, public relations have been broadening by 'critical public relation theory' (L'Etang et al., 2017), which focuses the liberation of public through the discursive spaces of dialogue contrary to the enslavement of public in the "functional approach of public relations" (L'Etang, 2017, p. 28; see also Edwards, 2012). The functional approach of public relations is the dominant paradigmatic framework, which is grounded in behaviourism and functionalism (Macnamara, 2015, p. 344), and it mostly highlights the elite's interests, and work to increase capital through neo-liberalism (Brown, 2014). Regardless, critical approach for public relation, pioneered by Jacquie L'Etang (2005, p. 522), has interpreted public relation broadly for the social and cultural development of the human society through expanding human potentials to an expected social transformation. L'Etang and Ihlen (2015, p. 94), further, confirm that 'public relation has for society' although public relations are widely used as a strategic communication for corporate revenues (see also Ihlen & Verhoeven, 2012). Consequently,

public relation through digital, social and mobile media (Verčič, D., Verčič, A., and Sriramesh, 2015:146), which is popularly expanding over the digital society also contributes for the well-being of human society (Coomb and Holladay, 2013, pp. 90-122) across activism and social movements largely aimed at social change (Hodges and McGrath,2011, p. 104). Hence, L'Etang et al., (2017) suggest the importance of critical public relation theory on exploring community oriented and society driven public relations. Therefore, critical public relation theory could be more useful to explore how public relation is made through young men's social media usage to change the social perception of young men's sexual cultures.

4. PUBLIC AND PUBLIC (ORGANIZATION)

Public is constituted by a number of different individuals, who are interested in making similar opinions and ideas as a formation of collectivity (Heath,2013). Situational theories by Grunig & Hunt, (1984) help to describe and classify the public and clarify the perceptual, motivational and cognitive antecedents that promote communicative behavior among members of the public. Accordingly, there are three basic categories of publics identified as activist, hot-issue and inactive (Grunig and Kim, 2017, p. 10) in terms of how public react in the process of communication.

To illustrate, publics are active and activist audiences who organize themselves as collectivities for solving their-own societal problems (Grunig and Kim, 2017, p. 6). Thus, active publics achieve their socio-organizational goals through producing activist relationships within their environment, which is encouraged by the "strategic management theory" (Grunig and Kim, 2017, p. 8; see also de Bussy, 2013). Individuals who face a particular problem or an issue first begin as loosely related and connected groups of individuals who view the issues in a similar way, but then develop into structured and organized communities as they share a common identity through their public style discourse. (Grunig and Kim, 2017, pp. 13-14). Even though the activists and activism are not new concepts, the way the activism is being practiced has evolved extensively recently (Richmond, 2017). While activists still rely on offline activism to inspire social or political change, many are now switching to digital activism through the use of digital media to educate, inform, and support their specific campaigns. For instance, Cozier and Witmer (2010) claim that, in the digital age, publics use ideology to construct a shared reality (see also Cozier and Witmer, 2010), and to make their self-identities through the 'public sphere' (Habermas, 1962). In this background, it is suggested that young men organise themselves through social media as a "public organisation" to receive the public's reputation to the success of their sexual relations. As Publics are formed by the diverse range of identities – through the intersectionality of age, class, religion, nationality, race, gender and ability (see also Vardeman -Winter, Tindall, and Jiang, 2013), young men's behaviour could be affected to the discursive spaces of other publics as well as the young men. Thus, this 'public organisation' is operated in two paths; first to make understanding within young men themselves and second, to deal with the dominant hetero-normative society to get the

public's reputation towards their sexual relations. A similar position is taken up by Grunig and Kim (2017, p. 24) who argue that 'collectivities of people is a "public organization" enabling to interact with the formal organization'. Thus, this exploration of young men's social media use has much to offer.

Moreover, the "situational theory of publics" can be used to explain publics as both organization and public. Thus, this theory is now recognized as a public relation theory by Jeong-Nam Kim and James E. Grunig (2011, p. 123). Even though 'organisation' and 'public' are two separate entities, it is suggested that young men's organisation as collectivities is overlapped as 'organization' and 'public' (Grunig and Kim, 2017, p. 24; see also Neilson, 2001), which is for this reason that the organization is also constituted by the publics (Leitch and Motion, 2010, p. 101). In short, rather than organisation is a corporate business, in which it is received monitory capital as an end result of the public relations, young men's connectivity as a 'public organisation' through social media contributes as a social capital to success the young men's sexual relations to be challengeable. Thus, social capital enables people to work together, meet people, create societies, and live together (Luoma-aha,2009, p.234).

5. INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

The Internet and digital media has played an increasingly important role in the exchange of information and interpersonal communication alongside the rapid advancement of information and communication technologies. These technical advancements also gave disenfranchised individuals and communities new opportunities to empower themselves and create relationships while improved interpersonal communications (Mehra, Merkel, & Bishop, 2014). According to Ledingham & Bruning (2000, p.178), interpersonal communication is the fact that creates mutual lines of understanding between sender and receiver. Consequently, public to public communication can be understood through interpersonal communication and relational communication (Kent, 2013, p.340). Alongside this, commitment as a personal choice, and trust with mutual understanding are two elements, which helps to success the interpersonal relationship (see also Brehm, 1992). However, Kent's study (2013) would have been more useful if he addresses how individual make strong interpersonal communication through social media. Thus, it is suggested that the interpersonal communication is the primary mode of dialogue creating through social media on the broad aspect of making public organisation.

Moreover, interpersonal communication can be understood using "transactional model of communication" - as a process of the seeds of rhetoric and persuasion. Thus, characters are needed to send and receive messages through rhetoric and persuasion (Anderson and Ross, 1994). By way of illustration, the interpersonal communication is a face - to - face communication (see also J. Grunig and Grunig,1992), which is applied in the grass-root process of public relation (Capella,1987, p.87; Ledingham & Bruning, 2000, p.208). However, as a transactional viewpoint, interpersonal communication process, which is mutually dependent on each other's active involvement, is

interestingly consistent with the two-way symmetrical model of public relation (Grunig and Hunt, 1984) - making a dialogic conversation. Accordingly, how young men involve in interpersonal communication through social media is essential to identify the process of public relations.

6. FOUR PR MODELS - TWO - WAY SYMMETRICAL MODEL

In their seminal study of 'Excellent Public Relation Project', Grunig and Hunt (1984) identified 'the four models of public relations' on exploring the historical development of public relations. These four models reflect the values, goals and behaviors that organizations or public communities hold or use when engaging in public relations (Baskin & Bruno, 1977). Further these models have made a conceptual and pragmatic difference from propaganda, and developed it as a professional responsibility of communication (Weaver, 2015, p. 267). Nevertheless, the first three models; publicity, public information, and two-way asymmetric model do not originally support for a better understanding among publics and organization, on account of the fact that they are highly inspired by the manipulative aspects of persuasion and the propaganda. However, as Grunig (2013, p. 289-291) confirms that the two- way symmetrical model gives avenues for information through a balanced dialogue and discussion. Thus, Grunig (2013, p.315) has concluded that the two-way symmetric model is the excellent public relation, and is a normative model to understand and solve the problems within the environment, where both publics and organization are lived together. In comparison, the two-way symmetrical model has symmetrical effects where the communication is beneficial to both the individual and the public. Publics and Organizations that use two-way symmetrical public relations use bargaining, negotiation, and conflict management techniques to bring about symbiotic improvements in the thoughts, perceptions, and actions of the individual as well as those of its public (Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang, & Lyra, 1995). In short, two-way symmetric model of public relations could be used to understand how young men make dialogue through social media.

7. DIALOGUE FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Transformative dialogue refers to a particular form of communication in which there is the possibility for profound learning, change, and growth (Gergen, McNamee, & Barret, 2001) In social transformation, micro or community level public relation practices are applied leading to community building (Holtzhausen,2005; Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988). For this, dialogue has been used as a technique of collective understanding within a specific socio-cultural community (Hodges and McGrath, 2011, p. 91). Similarly, Bussy (2010, p. 133) demonstrates that aim of the dialogue is to obtain willingness to 'change through understanding' (see also Buber,2002, p. 196). Dialogue has been further studied leading to public relation advocacy on consultation, debate, or rhetorical dialogue (Heath, p. 2000). In particular, dialogic practices have been developed by postmodern approaches for public relations as a solution for the crisis of modernity such as social exclusion and environmental

degradation (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 21; see also Botan & Taylor, 2004; Bruning et al., 2004). A similar position is taken by Oyvind et al. (2009), who suggest that social theory could be immensely helpful in reshaping theoretical scope of modern public relations through a spectrum of social theorists such as Jurgan Habermas, Nilklas Luhmann. Michel Faoucault, Ulrich Beck, Pierre Bourdieu, etc. Thus, modern dialogic public relations have been attempting to shape the society, and giving voiceless people the opportunity to be listened (Sheehan and Xifra,2015, p. 375). Sexualities and sexual cultures have also been mediated and re-mediated in various ways through dialogic public relations through digital media. People with diverse sexual identities have found support and sociality via networked media (Burgess, Cassidy, Duguay, & Light, 2016) This has implication for how young men make dialogue through social media to change the overwhelming postcolonial perceptions of non- heteronormative sexual behaviours for a better social transformation.

8. ACTIVISM, SOCIAL CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION

Recently, public relation theory has been extended along with the developments of societal change, activism and social movements (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1997), so that public relation activities could be identified as a historical product of emerging change, transformation and contestation (L'Etang, 2011, p. 224). Activism and social movement have given the payment for new orientation of public relation apart from the functional approach – corporate public relations. (L'Etang, 2015, p. 28). Likewise, Coombs and Holladay (2007) argue that activists have practiced public relations before the presence of corporations, and they have actively participated for a change in their-own societies (Smith & Ferguson, 2010, p. 397). In particular, Kim and Sriramesh confirm (2009, p. 94) that public relations operate as a "strategic management function", when more socio-cultural and environmental factors support for the activism. Strategic management approach explains how public relations takes place powerfully in the dialogic participation (Weaver, 2015; Weaver et al., 2006). Thus, young men's social media use in making sexual relations could also be positioned as an activism, in which they hope to change how others understand young men's sexual behaviours.

9. INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR A DIALOGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

For solving problems associated with the public's life, people behave as virtual communities as the Internet has created a virtual space for public in the new media culture (Kim and Ni,2010, p. 46), in order that this virtual interaction could shape public relations to engage in the social resistance. People use social media to avoid from their isolation and restrictions to social combination (see also Postmes & Brunsting, 2002). However, there are minimal fellow up researches on public use of the internet and social media for problem- solving and activism as an empowering strategy (see also Elliot,1997; Coombs ,1998), and the research on theoretical and conceptual explanation to how public could use

social media spaces for power and resources on non-organizational engagement (Kim and Ni,2010, p. 47).

Moreover, in the development of social media, traditional limits of 'private' and 'public' have been transgressed by the process of reflexivity. Falkheimer and Heide (2015, p. 169) reveal that public relations, which is evolved through the social media, currently remains as the platinum bullet for building symmetric, transparent and dialogic relations with the publics (see also Schultz & Wehmeier, 2011). Equally, public relations through social media has been growing (Wright & Hinson, 2012, 2014), on the provision of algorithmic construction (Collister, 2015, p. 363) for the network from individual spatial distribution into a single constant montage on the expansion of social media such as Facebook, Twitter (Manovich, 2012). However, the term 'social media' is defined by Van Dijck (2013, p. 310) as 'the media which opens more avenues to be socialized through the user-cantered platforms which facilitates to communal activities'. Thus, the fundamental aspects of social media; interactivity, dialogue, participation and collaboration (Boler, 2008; Bucy,2004; Cover,2004; Jenkins,2006, Macnamara,2014), could be used to explore young men's social media connection, which creates a phenomenal aspect of public relation in the digital era.

10. SRI LANKAN PUBLIC RELATION CONTEXT

In Sri Lanka, a number of public relations companies used to exercise 'reputation laundering' on questionable activities in regimes (Linstead, 2015, p. 314), which is largely blamed for persuasive propaganda owing to the fact that the unethical practices of public relations. In the meanwhile, Sri Lankan recent public relation practices have mostly been shaped by the needs of commercial marketing and advertising (Jinadasa, 2017, 2015, p. 4). Instead, local historicity, and the social and cultural behaviours of the people remains exhaustive in cultural resources for making public relations (Jinadasa, 2017a; Nandasiri, 2016). To illustrate, at present, effective public relation practices within the public organisation, have been emerged in building communities on the post-disastrous management programs, in the instances of Tsunami and concurrent natural hazards (Jinadasa, 2016, p. 249). Based on this, it is suggested that public to public practices of public relations are produced within the situations of community based problem solving.

11. CONCLUSION

In the internet era, social network media has been using as a tool of communication for making mutual understanding and reputation within the interested groups (Arrow, 2008; CPRS, 2008; Harlow, 1976). For instance, Facebook has been using as a tool of public relation for social movement (see also Paek, et al., 2013) through accurate information and dialogic conversation. Despite the fact that social networking is used by LGBTI NGOs to create relationship between the organization and LGBTI people

(Rodriguez, 2016, p. 330), it is difficult to find a substantial exploration on how LGBT people themselves make their understanding and reputation through social media without NGOs. Thus, It is suggested that young men, who are interested in having sexual relations and intimacies with young men, use social media to create understood relations within themselves, and to establish reputation towards young men sexual relations within other publics. In this instance, a similar position is taken up by Kim and Grunig (2011:123, 2017), who have identified, that there is a possibility to create public relations among public (public to public) as a 'public organization' outside the functional approach of public relation, with reference to activism and social moment aimed at social transformation. Thus, this current study -how young men form as public organization through social media on their sexual encounters has much to offer.

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