Strategic Public Relations through Online Social Media

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Abstract

*S*ocial media are a form of communication used to access target groups at all levels and whose its use in public relations (PR) activities is growing. It is experiencing a booming trend that seems destined to keep growing. More private Thai businesses are using social media as a communication tool in support of more traditional PR methods to build up corporate communication and promote products and services.

Public relations in private Thai businesses should focus mainly on innovative strategies via online social communication. PR practitioners should modify their practices in terms of implementation, elements of communication, roles of the practitioner, job characteristics, target group variety and application of social media. All of these can be classified in accordance with the four steps of the PR process: Defining PR problems, strategic PR planning, PR communication strategy and PR evaluation, thus fostering a positive corporate image and reputation and supporting the organization in the long run.

KEYWORD: PUBLIC RELATION, ONLINE, SOCIAL MEDIA

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Introduction

Human communication comprises a sender, message, channel and receiver and is still evolving. Early, unsophisticated forms of data communication include verbal communication, messengers and even carrier pigeons. Communication later became more varied such as through letters, telephones, and radio and TV broadcasting. Entering the age of computers and the Internet, human communication was increasingly made through electronic and digital media (McQuail, 2005) such as Internet relay chat systems, chat programs and e-mail. Currently, much human communication starts with online social media.

Online social media play an important role in the digital age. Information and technological communication influence both personal and professional lives. In the beginning, social media were more of a hobby, used to communicate among close friends. But later, organizations started using social media to support the efficiency of traditional media, thus bringing it into the private sector. Social media are an innovation that allows business operations of unlimited distance, time and location (Castells, 2011). This major mechanism of "technology as information" is used within private companies (Siverstone, 1999). In other words, technological changes in communication influence an organization's information management, while digital technology makes obtaining information more convenient, faster, more accurate and accessible from anywhere and at any time.

Technological communication in Thailand has progressed rapidly in recent years. The Internet in general and online social media in particular have been used in the PR sector for data/information communication, data/information collection and information services for organizational administration.

(www.etda.or.th/Internetuserprofile 2014 Thailand).

PR is an important channel of communication between businesses, target groups and the general public, so practitioners should know how to use relevant PR communication tools. Traditionally, television, radio and print media were the main tools for corporate communication, but the Internet and online social media have had a major influence on the evolution of PR in this global information age. These new media are a phenomenon that PR practitioners should study and use to support corporate performance.

Successful PR depends on communication competency. This means the PR practitioner should cater his message to the target groups so that the groups will pay attention and behave as desired. Communication today depends on technology, which changes daily. PR is one of those sectors that recognize the importance and advantage of the Internet. Online is seen as a good venue for corporate communication and branding as well as disseminating information, products and services. PR practitioners should strive to create business opportunities online (Dilenschneider, 2010).

One big problem preventing PR practitioners from planning how to use media and technology completely is a lack of knowledge of communication technology. They must always be aware that building knowledge, understanding and good relationships are main objectives in PR. Communication technology is a major tool in PR practitioners' careers (Taylor and Kent, 2010). Effective PR through social media requires a knowledge and understanding of methods and a sense of which ones to use. PR practitioners should keep up to date on technology so they can apply the latest developments in the field of PR, both now and in the future (James, 2007).

PR Implementation

PR in today's digital age is broader in scope than ever before (Scott, 2007), and the evolution of social media has affected PR implementation in the past and will continue to do so.

PR in the past: PR practitioners used to distribute organizational information via mass media mainly. Target groups received the information only through mass media, often through press releases. Organizations had to have something to write about before issuing a PR release. Efficacy could be measured by the PR news that was disseminated through mass media (Pavlik, 2007).

PR today: PR has become transformed by the development of website technology. Public Relations 1.0 (PR 1.0) is based on traditional PR tools together with Web resources such as e-newsletters, viral marketing and webcasts. Public Relations 2.0 (PR 2.0) further expands Web resources using new media – this is an extreme way of approaching various target groups as well as those the PR practitioner cannot directly access (Brown, 2009; Philip and Young, 2010).

PR in the future: In 2016, PR implementation will have evolved into Public Relations 3.0 (PR 3.0), a Semantic Web that is an extension of the Web through standards by the World Web Consortium (W3c), automatically linking similar large database systems informing of subject matter. (Sheldrake, 2012) Due to its remarkable data management, it has been named the Intelligent Web.

Social media are revolutionizing the PR sector in terms of the elements of communication, roles of the practitioner, job characteristics, variety of target groups and application of social media, as follows:

Elements of PR communication. A significant tool for corporate communication and marketing communication is public relations. It is essential to create awareness through online social media in conjunction with other PR practices via traditional media. The elements of PR communication are:

1. The company as a sender. PR practitioners function as both senders and receivers. Conducting PR via online social media and elsewhere on the Internet, their role is to be both active and passive. Practitioners must learn to apply technological new media skills in PR activities (Pavlik, 2007). They must set the agenda for PR releases, monitor public opinion and constantly gather information from online social media in preparation for correcting misconceptions and promoting understanding.

2. The message. This is the PR content to be communicated. PR practitioners must present content via computer and the Internet. Content presentation can include written text, pictures and videos and should be interesting, concise and catered to the target audience (Wannakorn, 2014).

3. Media. These are the tools for communicating with the target group (Rerkattanapipat and Wongreanthong, 2014).

3.1. Owned or controlled media. PR practitioners can control content, time and budget – for example, via websites, e-mail, Facebook, blogs, Instragram and Line.

3.2. Paid or uncontrolled media. PR practitioners cannot control content or time but can control budgets and the frequency of distribution such as newspapers, magazines and other print media or radio or TV programs.

3.3. Earned media. These are online social media on the internet. Companies cannot control the content but can monitor situations via Web posts, Twitter, Internet forums and online dialogue. Online social media users generate, filter and distribute content.

4. Receivers or target groups of a company. These can be divided into internal targets (top executives and lower-level staff) and external targets (groups of people not directly relevant to the organization). These groups are influential in and

knowledgeable of business matters and include consumers, mass media, communities and the general public. Receivers of communication via online social media comprise the following characteristics: Loyalty, consumption, media literacy, participation and extra-textual activities (Beddows, 2012).

The four elements of PR communication can be said to be in the context of the characteristics of the new media landscape. These characteristics are two-way communication, ease of access and dissemination, continuous learning, alignment and integration, creation of a community, portability, convergence, interoperability, aggregation of content, social collectivity and cyber-cooperation, and user-based transformation (Logan, 2010).

Roles in PR. Formerly, PR practitioners had six roles in traditional media: Management, media relations and communication liaison, technical communication, PR communication, research and evaluation, and spokesperson and representative of the organization (Thamwipat, 1999). With the advancement of online social media, PR practitioners still have six roles, but now they are corporate communication, change management, situation management, general management, expertise prescriber and relationship establishment (Jaichansukkit, 2014).

Jobs in PR. There have been ten PR jobs in traditional media: Publicity, corporate image building, special events, public affairs, community relations, issue management, crisis management, research and evaluation, PR marketing and patronization (Thamwipat, 1999). Following the development of online social media, PR tasks have changed to fall under the concept of "A Rough Guide to the Main Activities in Public Relations": Internal communication, corporate communication, media relations, business-to-business activity, public affairs, community relations and social investor relations, strategic communication, crisis management, copywriting, publication management and event management exhibitions (Fawkes, 2012 and Theaker, 2013).

Variety of target groups. Formerly, PR practitioners could distinctively specify target groups, but due to the potential of online social media, they can now communicate with various target groups at once. PR practitioners can research target groups' KAP (knowledge, attitudes, practices). For instance, digital savvy means daily life is concerned with digital matters such as communication, information sharing and business transactions and operations. Children born in the digital age tend to have greater expertise in digital technology. Teenagers use online social media and smartphones. The new generation working in the city requires cross-media screens and use smartphones to access the online world (Positioning, 2013). Furthermore, the new generation gathers information from television morning and night, select live news broadcasts on their smartphones and favor a mix of content. This generation prefers short online programs, 5-7 lines at a time appearing on the screen (Voice TV survey, 2014).

Application of online social media. The new media work with Web 2.0 technology – that is, tools operating on the World Wild Web and smartphones. These include forms of communication, content production, dissemination, communication exchange and online social network participation. Online social media can be classified in terms of both tools and practical applications (Williamson, 2013), as shown in the table below:

Table 1: Wide Range of Online Social Media Genres

Types of Online Social Media	Description and application	Examples
Social network sites	Individuals and organizations create profiles and share information, images and videos. Others can "Like" the content, share content, make comments and engage in discussion.	Facebook Google +
Microblogs	Short public messages that can be focused using hashtags.	Twitter
Video and photo sharing websites	Photographs and videos can be uploaded and shared.	YouTube Instagram
Personal and corporate blogs	Blogs are a type of online diary; with a writing style that is informal and up to date. They can be individual or collective.	Blogger
Wiki Sphere and online collaboration	Online user-generated, collaboratively developed text and documents.	Wikipedia
Forums, discussion boards and groups	Websites or e-mail based on lists of discussions. They can be public or private.	Google groups Yahoo groups Pantip.com
Geospatial tagging	Posts location including comments and pictures to online social Media	Facebook Foursquare

(Source: Williamson, 2013)

Online social media have become a new media communication tool for private Thai businesses' PR activities, with different applicable objectives. Private enterprises in Thailand use online social media for business-to-business (B2B) PR. Private Thai companies use four types of online social media (Juntana, 2014; Prapapan, 2014):

1. Corporate websites. Website presentations of information such as a company's history, products and services. These websites are promoted using an Internet search engine such as Google or Yahoo or a search direction categorized by content characteristics in accordance with a consumer's interest.

2. Blogs. These are Web pages consisting of messages, pictures and links. Users read and comment on certain blog writings. PR blogs can be subdivided into three types:

2.1. Corporate blogs. Blogs created to distribute information, products and services and monitor consumer comments. PR via blogs is appropriate for well-known organizations that have popular products and services.

2.2. Microblogs. Tiny blogs such as Twitter, where brief messages of not more than 140 words can be posted. These make the world smaller in terms of communication and publicizing corporate information.

2.3. Non-corporate blogs. Blogs by experienced individuals capable of writing for special interest. PR practitioners hire freelance writers instead of celebrities to participate in PR activities. These persons write text and tell anecdotes supporting products and services – for example, writing about product and service launches.

3. PR via website. Websites using multimedia files such as video clips, motion pictures, songs, sports and advertisements. These are similar to photo-sharing websites but solely multimedia such as YouTube.

4. PR via smartphone app. Smartphones have become very fashionable, and users can install various mobile apps as they like. PR practitioners can use apps such as Line and

WeChat for establishing relationships with target groups, sales promotion and branding. Unlike many other apps, Line has the advantages of two-way communication in terms of group specification and selection, communication at any time, multimedia distribution, voice conversation, animation, stickers supporting dialogue, timelines and accommodation of various of data files.

What type of communication format would be the most appropriate in different situations following the evolution of online social media? PR through social media communication in private Thai businesses still follow the four steps of the PR process:

1) Defining the problems;

2) Strategic planning;

3) Determining communication strategy; and

4) Evaluating (Wilcox and Cameron, 2015; Witmer, 2012).

Defining PR Problems. This is the first step in the PR process. Strategic planners try to find solutions to a problem occurring with the organization. Situation analysis is based solely on reliable evidence, thus leading to an accurate situation assessment. Assessing a situation is crucial for strategic PR planning (Wilcox and Cameron, 2015), as follows:

Reactive PR: Examines the internal situation and environment. Reactive PR is for solving a problem that exists – for example, using online social media as a business communication channel in the context of new media technology.

Proactive PR: Evaluates situations for PR opportunities. Proactive PR involves planning originating from various motivations – for example, a full-scale digital reengineering of the PR structure.

An essential tool for situation analysis is formal research, both qualitative and quantitative. Informal research is another tool that can involve initial opinion

surveys or critical issues. It consists of observations, in-depth interviews, monitoring online comments and analysing criticism within organizations through both traditional and online social media (Wannakron, 2014).

Strategic PR Planning. This helps both executives and PR planners determine which management resources can support future work, how the business will be different from what it is now. Executives and PR planners must collaborate to formulate a mission statement that describes the company's aspirations for the future.

In terms of strategic planning, executives and PR planners collect necessary data needed to map out a corporate vision, which takes time and careful thought. They must work together to apply the data to the planning process, thus leading to an appropriate strategic organizational plan. Procedures and strategic planning processes (Srisuk, 2014; Sompopkulwej, 2014; Rerkattanapipat, 2014); Pangkhanont, 2014) are as follows: Monitoring organizational status. Monitoring and analyzing the external environment. Formulating strategic planning objectives. Formulating organizational strategies. Drafting strategies. Allocating resources for achieving the strategic plan. Establishing an operational plan. Revising practices after the strategic plan has been implemented and Revising the entire operation. Just as the PR strategy will conform to the organizational mission of the private company, the company will include the

PR strategy in its organizational plans. PR strategy is similar to other corporate plans but has a different purpose. Strategies used are formulated to achieve PR goals. The PR strategy of communication through online social media is similar to using traditional media (Noppawan, 2014; Prapapan, 2014; Pangkhanont, 2014), as follows: Situation assessment. Setting PR objectives. Data collection. Goal achievement. Target groups. Main message. Strategy formulation. Tactics formulation. Work schedule. Budget formulation and Evaluation.

Determining PR Communication Strategy The main foundation of internal and external management within a private business depends on a good and effective command of communication. An integrated strategy using traditional and online social media is recommended.

Traditional media are channels of communication providing basic data that are accurate and complete. This is a main principle of an organization's database. Online social media are more rapid channels that are timely, short, precise and easily understood but lack sufficient detail, thus leading to possible misunderstandings. PR planners should consider using traditional media and/or online social media in accordance with their capacity and nature (Hausman, 2014 cited in http://www.hauseman.marketingletter.comsocialmedoctober 6, 2014), as follows:

Table 2: Capacity and Nature of Traditional and Online Social Media

Traditional media	Online social media
One-way communication	Two-way communication
Closed-system communication	Open-system communication
Opaque	Transparent
Mass communication	One-to-one communication
About me	About you
Professional content	Brand- and user-generated content
Polished content	Authentic content
Paid media	Free platform
Reach and frequency	Engagement
Celebrities	Users and influencers
Economic decision-making	Community decision communication
Pre-produced/scheduled	Real-time creation
Top-down strategy	Down-top strategy
Formal language	Informal language
Passive involvement	Active involvement

(Source: Hausman, 2014)

Previously, PR communication was intended to provide information, publicize, persuade and encourage target groups' new behavior in accordance with PR planner's requirements. PR communication strategy should fall in line with strategic administrative concepts – that is, PR strategy as a two-way symmetric model focuses on mutual understanding between an organization and target groups. To coordinate benefits of both the organization and the target groups, an organization should make use of both traditional and online social media as transmission channels. PR planners should also consider these tactics (Dilenschneider, 2010):

1. Using computers and the Internet to design and produce content.

2. Linking content designed for traditional media to online social media.

3. Using a variety of media – text, slides, videos, anything relevant to the company.

4 .Using symbols, colors and images of products and services in content design.

5. Using language that is easily understood and keeping sentences short. Corporate online social media can use a conversational style such as one-on-one or group communication. 6. Making content easily understandable and avoiding technical jargon. Make target groups feel comfortable by highlighting positive aspects of a product or service – for example, by using anecdotes or a question-and-answer format.

7. Constantly updating PR content with new text, slides and comments. Coordinate multiple online social media sites such as using Twitter for broader information dissemination.

8. Building relationships between the company and target groups to emphasize that products and services are catered to them.

9. Interacting with target groups via online social media - for example, by holding special PR activities and fostering timeline awareness to improve relationships with target groups.

10. Boosting corporate social media to increase participation of target groups so they can express their interests.

11. Enlarging the number of target groups through word of mouth - one to one, one to many, many to one and many to many. These persons can communicate information about corporate products and services to other consumers.

12. Making PR and other messages productive. The information should convince the target groups that the products and services meet their requirements.

PR content: Content and the social media format are the main emphasis of communicating PR via online social media when accessing certain target groups and getting them to remember the content. Both content and the social media format are equally significant. A business' corporate image is not solely dependent on promoting PR news on online social media, but PR planners must place priority on corporate PR (CPR) and marketing PR (MPR) content (Wongreanthong, 2014). CPR provides facts and other relevant information that fosters understanding and trust, while MPR focuses on the prominent points of various products and services that can meet customer requirements and create added value (Srisuk, 2014). In other words, CPR and MPR content on online social media should cover corporate activities and information, business marketing positions, executive vision, the value of products and services, relationships with target groups, data research and consulting, the corporate marketing agenda, innovations, business connections, expertise (as shown by awards or rankings) and corporate social responsibility (Jaichansukkit, 2014).

PR Evaluation

In practical terms, evaluation is the starting point of a new PR project since it attempts to implement it. Evaluating PR is necessary and beneficial to the strategic PR planner, and there are several ways such as progressive or summary evaluation. One notable type of evaluation is the macro model comprising three steps (Dilenschneider, 2010):

1. Input assessment. Analyzes and reviews input brought into the PR project determination process such as information for PR content, media research results and media exposure.

2. Output assessment. Assesses the quality and quantity of media and content distributed to the public via website visits, fanpage comments and transferring information to other websites. This step is used to assess the PR practitioner's efficiency and should be performed before, during and after a PR exercise.

3. End results. The final step when a PR project has been completed. It assesses changes in knowledge, attitudes and behavior as well as whether the PR project

has achieved its goals. Evaluation results can be used to solve corporate problems.

In addition, assessment of PR through online social media communication requires data. Data collection should be both quantitative and qualitative (Hammon and Willington,2013) – quantitative by gathering data on awareness, perceptions, media reach, message consideration, message recall, level of increased knowledge, attitude changes, the number of people who behave as desired, objectives achieved and how many participated. These are aimed at telling "how much" or "how many" have been achieved. At the same time, qualitative analysis will explore PR issues by gathering in-depth data on target groups' behaviors and the reasons behind those behaviors. This method is aimed at answering questions about the "what", "how" and "why" of a phenomenon (Prapapan, 2014).

Moreover, PR planner gathers data through public social networks and online social media by monitoring the Internet (Dilenschneider, 2010), as follows:

1. Online communication analys is of competitors such as their official websites or online video broadcasts. This will evaluate how competitors interact with target groups.

2. Monitoring websites to obtain information, knowledge and viewpoints. This will afford a greater understanding of markets and target groups. These information sources can lead to greater consumer insights on websites and changes online.

3. Online community participation. Online community groups are unique, and this will give a greater understanding of target groups' perspective.

4. Gathering information on online networks. Online communication with target groups can prove more profitable than personal contact. Companies can respond to both positive and negative criticism.

5. Monitoring daily new websites relevant to a company's business.

6. Monitoring Wikipedia content related to a business. This website is a prime venue for people wanting to cause trouble for a company.

7. Data collection of competitors' negative comments on websites.

8. Assessment of target groups' website visits via corporate online social media. Opinions and suggestions from e-mail and SMSs may be analyzed and satisfaction evaluated using quantitative and qualitative research.

9. Awareness and satisfaction assessments. These can be further extended to foster brand loyalty.

The use of online media as strategic PR tools and innovations of private sectors in Thailand

The researcher has conducted in-depth interviews with corporate relations directors/PR management/ personnel of various private businesses and organizations in Thailand to study the use of online media as strategic PR tools and innovations of private sectors in Thailand .And it is found out the private businesses and organizations have made the following adjustments due to the influence of online media. The actions taken include evaluations on the impact of the online media towards their organization and personnel/ the organization structure/ adjustment of the organization culture to be in line with the new organization structure and culture as well as development of mechanisms for PR/ organization structure and PR personnel to accommodate such changes. At the same time they have to devise mechanics to decrease the negative effects/ increase the benefits and to develop relationships, activities and trainings for their personnel to be ready for the change in their roles/ duties and responsibilities and devise processes for familiarization and acceptance of online media. (Puksawadde, 2015)

The main objectives of the use of online media as strategic PR tools and innovations of private sectors in Thailand are

1)as the main media outlets

2) to complement the traditional media

3) to facilitate the modernization of the organization's internal and external communications

4) to advertise and promote the organization and its products and services

5) as IT channel for public relations

6) to manage the information, details and issues concerning the organization

7) to create social networks and interactions with the target groups and business partners

8)to create trends and interests in the market

9) to encourage specific target groups' consumption behaviors (eg. schoolers/university students/ working people) and to create business advantages for the company. The online social media are used mainly for PR purposes and they are carried out via the company's website, via blogs, via other sources of information, via online communities, via web links and via applications on smart phones.

The utilization of social media of private sectors for PR operation in Thailand

The researcher has studied 400 PR management and personnel/ marketers/ marketing communication practitioners of 40 private organizations and companies by survey research. And the following are the findings: (Puksawadde, 2015)

All the objectives of the use of online media are rated at "high" level. They include

1) as IT channel for PR (4.09)

2) to advertise and promote the organization / products/ services (3.97)

3) to facilitate the modernization of the organization's internal and external communications (3.96)

4) to create social networks and interactions with the target groups and business partners (3.96)

5) to create trends and interests in the market(3.92)

6) to encourage specific target groups' consumption behaviors(3.90)

7) to manage the information, details and issues concerning the organization (3.89)

8) to complement the traditional media (3.85)

9) to create business advantages for the company (3.82) and

10) as the main media outlets (3.71).

The following are the social media outlets used by private sectors in Thailand for PR purposes ranging from high to low levels respectively: High level group includes Facebook (4.30), the organization's website (4.22), LINE (4.18), YouTube (4.00) and Google+ (3.57). The moderate level group includes Instagram (3.44), the company's blog (3.13), other web blogs (3.26) Wikipedia (3.00). And the low level group is Twitter (2.70)

The following are the details of the use of social media for Public Relations tasks ranked as "high": for announcements (4.10) for risk and crisis management (3.98) for announcements about special events (3.94) for PR materials (3.89) for Marketing Communication (3.81) for PR releases (3.80) for PR campaigns (3.76) for media relations (3.67) and internal relations (3.50)

The following are the details of the use of social media for Public Relations daily operations ranked as "high": for information updates/the company's news and announcements (4.07) for follow-up on news and issues related to the company (4.05) for dissemination of news and information related to the company's products

and services (4.04) for follow-up on news and issues related to the company's products and services (3.98) for good image of the company's products and services for the customers' awareness and acceptance (3.92) for information and business insights related to the company (3.87) for surveys and analysis of news and information published online (3.86) to monitor and collect the news and information about the management (3.85) to study the target market (3.85) to study the situation in the country (in terms of economic, social, political, cultural and technological matters) (3.84) to create interactions with the customers with specific and non-specific purposes (3.83) to safeguard misunderstanding and unfavorable attitude towards the company (3.82) to monitor news and information about the competitors(3.81) to correct the customers' misunderstanding (3.81) to take control of the dissemination of the company's news and information (3.79) to build trust among the customers (3.79) to create two-way communication channel with the target market (3.79) to publicize the press releases and PR materials for the media (3.77) to monitor the competitors' movements (3.74) to evaluate the effectiveness of social media for Public Relations (3.74) to evaluate the progress and results of the execution of PR plans and projects (3.71) to monitor the target group's participation in PR activities online (3.70) to be another contact point with the customers (3.68) as a social network among the customers online to be part of the company's operations (3.62) to exchange/ share real time news and information with the customers (3.61) to survey the customers' opinions, attitudes and behaviors (3.61) to create online activities (3.59) to create word of mouth marketing (3.53) to study the situations in the foreign countries(in terms of economic, social, political, cultural and technological matters) (3.50)

to survey and study the general public's opinions, attitudes and behaviors (3.47)

PR practitioners take important roles as corporate communication practitioners. Their duties and responsibilities for social media are ranked as "high". The details of their duties and responsibilities are as follows: in creating good relationships with the target audience, making them part of the company's movements and participate the activities (3.75), in creating two-way communication channels with the target audience (3.73), in presenting the strength of the company/ product (3.73), in creating faith towards the content devised to communicate with the different target audiences (3.72), in educating and creating understanding among the target audience about the company's business operations (3.72), in providing support for marketing activities and communicate the related content for the public awareness and acceptance to encourage the consumption and/or use of service (3.70), in creating PR content via computer/ internet/ social network outlets (3.70), in safeguarding misunderstanding through explanations, discussions or clarification to create trust and faith towards the company (3.68), in responding to the target audience's request for information/ details about the company's products and services (3.66), in correcting misunderstanding through clarification on the rumors/issues/ situations (3.66), in creating the target audience's acceptance and approval of the company's business operations and activities (3.65), in creating and strengthening the brand/ managing the information/ issues related to the brand in order to build credibility and word of mouth among the target audience (3.63)

PR practitioners' roles in management are ranked as "moderate". The details are as follows: the role in encouraging the management and all personnel to handle the social,

economic, political, cultural and technological changes affecting the company's business operations (3.25) , in handling customer relations with all target audiences and stakeholders (3.21), in analyzing and managing the social, economic, political, cultural and technological effects and devising solutions to reduce the negative effects on the business (3.19) in training all personnel to be ready for social, economic, political, cultural and technological changes by offering training, workshops, seminars, fieldtrips both locally and internationally (3.06)

PR practitioners' roles in crisis management are ranked as "high". The details are as follows: the role in systematically implementing PR plans (3.64), in creating PR plans and projects (the organization/ products/ services) (3.51) and in analyzing and evaluating the follow-ups before/during/ and after the execution of the PR plans and projects (3.51)

PR practitioners' roles in coordinating are ranked as "high". The details are as follows: in executing and coordinating PR tasks via social network outlets with personnel in digital media/ marketing/ and other supporting units (3.47), in executing and coordinating PR tasks via social network outlets with personnel in digital media (3.36) in encouraging the PR management and personnel to take part in decision making on PR matters (3.30) in encouraging the PR management and personnel to take part in decision making on PR strategies (3.29) and in handling other tasks in PR department (planning, recruiting and training)

PR practitioners' roles in creating interactions and relationships are ranked as "high". The details are as follows: in creating good relationships with the target audiences (3.54), in creating good relationships with the press and media, in disseminating informative content (3.51) in creating good relationships with the general public/ specific target audiences/general target audiences/ customers via PR activities (3.51).

Summary

Most academics and professionals think about the transition in public relations work in terms of the recent advances in media technology and accept innovation from the West. PR practitioners have adjusted their practices in accordance with global trends.

Social media technology has affected corporate public relations by changing PR implementation, elements of PR communication, roles of the practitioner, job characteristics, target group variety and application of social media.

One approach to addressing this impact is strategic PR innovation through online social media communication in private Thai businesses under the concept of the four steps of the PR process: Defining PR problems, strategic PR planning, PR communication strategy and PR evaluation. These remain active tools for practitioners to execute PR practices in the context of communication technology changes.

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