

ACCESS, AWARENESS AND USAGE OF INTERNET BY PUBLIC RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS: COMPARATIVE GROUP ANALYSIS OF HARYANA AND HIMACHAL PRADESH GOVERNMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Public Relation not works in vacuum or in any direction. It works in well defined phases; listing and prioritizing of information to be disseminated, ascertaining existing knowledge or understanding public perceptions, communication objectives and priorities, message and media, implementation of message and media impact assessment and message redesign. Digital developments have shaken the world of the media. For 'Public Relations, Social Media is understood as a renaissance of relationship building'. So, E-PR (On-line PR) is not just a series of techniques; it provides a whole new perspective to Public Relations. Thinking from an E-PR perspective will therefore help in maximize the chance of e-business success. Having E-PR perspective' involves learning three new 'R's; Relations, Reputation & Relevance.

To find out that in such an IT based global era of Public Relations, does our departments of Public Relations and their manpower have knowledge, facts, awareness, comprehension, and most important adoption of this new digital/social media in their armory as a tool of crisis communication? The general objective of current study is to know the "Access, awareness, current situation and frequency of use of E-PR (On-Line PR) in government Public Relations department. In the present Study, Directors (Additional, Joint & Deputy Directors), District Public Relation officers (DPROs) and Assistant Public Relation officers (APROs) serving the Department of Information, Public Relations & Cultural Affairs, Haryana and Department of Information & Public Relations, Himachal Pradesh are taken as the sample. The total 96 Public Relation officers were available from the Haryana and, 80 from Himachal Pradesh. The sample size is (176) is very small and specific, so Census Method is adopted in selection of sample.

The findings shows that the PR Professionals of HP have better access of Internet at their work place as compared to Haryana. They are more aware of Internet usage as a PR tool. Their frequency of usage and current situation is far ahead of their counterpart in Haryana. Overall the Public Relation Officers in the Department of Information & Public Relations, Himachal Pradesh are more advanced, progressive and tech-savvy as compared to the Public Relation Officers of the Department of Information, Public Relations & Cultural Affairs, Haryana and have better E-PR (On-Line PR) perspective.

KEY WORDS: Public Relations, E-PR, On-Line PR, DPROs, APROs

INTRODUCTION

Public Relations is the planned effort to influence opinion through good character and responsible performance, based upon mutually satisfactory two-way communications. Public Relation not works in vacuum or in any direction. It works in well defined phases; listing and prioritizing of information to be disseminated, ascertaining existing knowledge or understanding public perceptions, communication objectives and priorities, message and media, implementation of message and media impact assessment and message redesign. According to the Public Relations Society of America, the components of Public Relations include the :counseling, research, media relations, publicity, employee/member relations, community relations, public affairs, governmental affairs, issues management, financial relations, industry relations, development/fund-raising, multicultural relations/ workplace diversity, special events and marketing communications.

Digital developments have shaken the world of the media. For ‘Public Relations, Social Media is understood as a renaissance of relationship building’. Social media refers to writing and broadcasting carried out by ‘the people formally known as the audience’. When anyone can publish their opinions in real time to mass audiences via social media, we can talk of ‘digital mass self-communication networks’.

E-PR (On-Line PR) references to Public Relations on the internet. But what exactly does that mean? Let’s spell it out; *E* for ‘Electronic’, *P* for ‘Public’ & *R* for ‘Relationship’. So E-PR can be defined as, “Electronic Public Relations is the communication with the media and distribution of material (Press release, articles, house journals, newsletters etc.) Via electronic format by utilizing internet based tools and industry leading techniques, it is now

possible to publish, syndicate, submit and analyze PR-activities like never before” or “Electronic Public Relations (e-PR) leverages the power of the internet to deliver your message industry leading technologies such as RSS (really simple syndication), blogs, podcasting and press release optimization enhances the publishing process, syndicate messages and enable measurable results”

The fact that Internet is a media that narrow-casts message to diverse audience means that you need to direct your E-PR efforts carefully. To conduct effective E-PR (On-Line PR) you must have clarity about your objectives, construct a strategy, identify your audience, conducting E-PR (On-Line PR) research and selecting E-PR tools(On-Line PR Tolls). So, E-PR is not just a series of techniques; it provides a whole new perspective to Public Relations. Thinking from an E-PR perspective will therefore help in maximize the chance of e-business success. Having E-PR perspective’ involves learning three new ‘R’s; Relations, Reputation & Relevance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I. Objective:

The general objective of current study is to know the “Access, awareness, current situation and frequency of use of E-PR (On-Line PR) in government Public Relations department.”

II. Hypothesis

The study intended to test the following null hypothesis; “There will be no significant mean difference between the Public Relation Officers (PROs) of Department of Information & Public Relations, Himachal Pradesh and Department of Information, Public Relations & Cultural Affairs, Haryana in context of Knowledge, awareness, current situation and frequency of usage of Internet as PR tool”.

III. Statement of the problem

To find out that in such an IT based global era of Public Relations, does our departments of Public Relations and their manpower have knowledge, facts, awareness, comprehension, and most important adoption of this new digital/social media in their armory as a tool of crisis communication?

IV. Model of Research

The researcher has followed the *Festinger* and *Ketz*' Model of research process that involves eight steps as: Formulation of a research problem, Conceptualizing a research design, Constructing the instrument for data collection, Writing the Research Proposal, Data Collection, Processing the Data, Sampling & Writing a Research report.

V. The Sample at a glance

In the present Study, Directors (Additional, Joint & Deputy Directors), District Public Relation officers (DPROs) and Assistant Public Relation officers (APROs) serving the Department of Information, Public Relations & Cultural Affairs, Haryana and Department of Information & Public Relations, Himachal Pradesh are taken as the sample. The total 96 Public Relation officers were available from the Haryana and, 80 from Himachal Pradesh. The sample size is (176) is very small and specific, so Census Method is adopted in selection of sample.

VI. Analysis of data

Descriptive Group Statistics (Means and Standard Deviations) and dependent “t” statistics of all the occupational groups i.e. Directors, District Public Relation Officers’ (DPROs), Assistant Public Relation Officers (APROs) were computed through SPSS-17 software. In it all the instructional/ operational instructions and commands of Prof. Andy Field (2005) were followed to find out the significant mean difference between the above mentioned three groups of Public Relations Officers in context of Knowledge, awareness, current situation and frequency of use of E-PR (On-Line PR).

COMPARATIVE GROUP ANALYSIS

A. Internet access in the office/department

Out of total respondent 85.22 % of the respondents from both the states have Internet connection in their office and remaining 14.77 % Officers do not have it. Across the states, 90.00 % respondents of Himachal Pradesh have Internet access on their work places. In case of Haryana, 81.25 % of the respondents have Internet connection at their work place. This statistics is statistically not significant (P-0.654). The aforementioned statistics are represented below in table -1.

Table-1: Internet access in the office/department

Response	states		Combined (N= 176)	Chi-square	P- Value
	Haryana (N= 96)	H.P. (N= 80)			

	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Yes	78	81.25	72	90.00	150	85.22	2.654	0.654
No	18	18.75	08	10.00	26	14.77		

#Frequency in one or more column/row is less than five (< 5), so Yates' chi-square and Yates' P-values have been taken into consideration

B. Start using the 'Internet' as PR tool

When asked about the start of using Internet as PR tool, 30.00 % of the total respondents started using it, 'the day it was installed in their office'. Whereas 21.33 % started using between '1-6 months' of its installation, 14.66 % started using between '1-2 years' of its installation, 12.66 % started using between '7-12 months' of its installation, 08.66 % started using between '2-4 years' of its installation, and 06.00 % do not use it even today. Across the states, in case of H.P 34.72 % started using the Internet, 'the day it was installed in their office'. 16.66 % started using between '1-6 months' of its installation, whereas, 13.88 % started using between '1-2 years' of its installation, 11.11 % started using between '2-4 years' of its installation, 09.72 % start using after a period of 'four years or more', 08.33 % started using between '7-12 months' of its installation, and 06.41 % 'do not use it even today'. The figures for Haryana in same order are 25.64 %, 25.64 %, 15.38, 06.41, 03.84, 16.66 and 06.41 %. The statistics are statistically insignificant (P=0.559) across the states. The aforementioned statistics are represented below in table -2.

Table-2: Start using the 'Internet' as PR tool

Response	States				Combined (n= 150)		Yates' Chi-square#	Yates' P-Value#
	Haryana PR Office with Internet access (n= 78)		H.P. PR Office with Internet access (n= 72)					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
The day it was installed	20	25.64	25	34.72	45	30.00	4.883	0.559
After 1 to 6 months	20	25.64	12	16.66	32	21.33		
After 7 to 12 months	13	16.66	06	08.33	19	12.66		
After 1 to 2 years	12	15.38	10	13.88	22	14.66		
After 2 to 4 years	05	06.41	08	11.11	13	08.66		
After more than 4 years	03	03.84	07	09.72	10	06.66		
I don't use it	05	06.41	04	05.55	09	06.00		

#Frequency in one or more column/row is less than five (< 5), so Yates' chi-square and Yates' P-values have been taken into consideration.

C. Frequency of Internet use

When asked about the frequency of Internet usage, 48.29 % of the total respondents use the Internet ‘frequently’. Whereas 21.02 % use it ‘occasionally’, 14.77 % ‘never’ use it and 07.95 % use it ‘rarely’ or ‘not in a position to respond’. Across the states, 56.25 % respondents of H.P use it ‘frequently’, 22.50 % use it ‘occasionally’ and 10.00 % ‘never use it’. In case of Haryana, 41.66 % respondents use it ‘frequently’, 19.79 % use it ‘occasionally’ and 18.75 % ‘never use it’. The statistics are statistically insignificant (P=0.166) across the states.

When asked about the Internet user at their work place (frequent, occasional or rare users) 47.50 % of the total respondents devote ‘less than one hour’, 29.42 % devote ‘1-2 hours’, 13.23 % devote ‘3-4 hours’, 06.62 % devote ‘5-6 hours’ and 03.68% devote ‘more than 6 hours’ daily on the Internet. When come across the states, the almost same pattern has been observed and the statistics are statistically insignificant (Yates’P=0.912). The aforementioned statistics are represented below in table -3.

Table-3: Frequency of Internet use

Response	States				Combined (N= 176)		Chi-square	P-Value
	Haryana (N= 96)		H.P. (N= 80)					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Regularly	40	41.66	45	56.25	85	48.29	6.481	0.166
Occasionally	19	19.79	18	22.50	37	21.02		
Rarely	10	10.41	04	05.00	14	07.95		
Never	18	18.75	08	10.00	26	14.77		
Can’t say	09	09.37	05	06.25	14	07.95		
If regular, occasional or rare user, time devoted to Internet per day (n=136)								
Response	Haryana (n= 69)		H.P. (n= 67)		Combined (n= 136)		Yates' Chi-square#	Yates' P-Value#
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
< than 1 hour	36	52.17	28	41.79	64	47.05	0.988	0.912
1to 2 hours	18	26.08	22	32.83	40	29.42		
3 to 4 hours	08	11.59	10	14.92	18	13.23		
5 to 6 hours	05	07.24	04	05.97	09	06.62		
> than 6 hours	02	02.92	03	04.47	05	03.68		

Frequency in one or more column/row is less than five (< 5), so Yates' chi-square and Yates' P-values have been taken into consideration.

D. Purpose of use of Internet at office/department: Regarding purpose of usage, 59.09 % out of total use the Internet ‘for official and personal work’, 15.90 % use Internet for ‘official work only’ and 02.27 % for ‘personal work only’. Interestingly, 22.74 % of the total

respondents don't use computer at all in their office. Across the states, out of total respondents of Haryana 15.62 %use Internet 'only for official work', 04.16 % for 'personal work', 52.09 % for 'official and personal work' and 28.13 % 'don't use at all'. The figures for Himachal Pradesh are 16.25 %, 0 %, 67.50 % and 16.25 % respectively. The respondents from H.P. are so dedicated to their official assignments that 'no one uses the Internet for personal work during office time'. The above statistics are statistically not significant (Yates'P-0.140) across the states. The aforementioned statistics are represented below in table -4.

Table-4: Purpose of use of Internet at office/department

Response	States				Combined (N= 176)		Yates' Chi- square#	Yates' P- Value#
	Haryana (N= 96)		H.P. (N= 80)					
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Official work only	15	15.62	13	16.25	28	15.90	5.474	0.140
Personal work only	04	04.16	00	00.00	04	02.27		
For both	50	52.09	54	67.50	104	59.09		
Don't use at all	27	28.13	13	16.25	40	22.74		

Frequency in one or more column/row is less than five (< 5), so Yates' chi-square and Yates' P-values have been taken into consideration.

CONCLUSION

The PR Professionals of HP have better access of Internet at their work place as compared to Haryana. They are more aware of Internet usage as a PR tool. Their frequency of usage and current situation is far ahead of their counterpart in Haryana. Overall the Public Relation Officers in the Department of Information & Public Relations, Himachal Pradesh are more advanced, progressive and tech-savvy as compared to the Public Relation Officers of the Department of Information, Public Relations & Cultural Affairs, Haryana and have better E-PR (On-Line PR) perspective.

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