

MODULE - 2

THEORETICAL BASIS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Know why the practitioner needs to understand theories of human relationships and behavior.
2. Comprehend the three theories about human relationships.
3. Understand and know how to apply theories about cognition and behavior in mass communication.

Why Understand Theory?

Theories help practitioners explain and predict human behavior and communication and guide organizational decision making.

How Theories Connect with Public Relations

- What is theory?
 - A theory is a prediction of how events and actions are related.
- How do theories help the PR practitioner?
 - Using theories can make campaigns and messages more effective.

THEORIES

- Theories Of Relationships

- 1) Systems Theory
- 2) Situational Theory

- Theories of Persuasion and social infl

- 1) Social Exchange Theory
- 2) Diffusion Theory
- 3) Social Learning Theory
- 4) Elaborated Likelihood Theory

- Theories of Mass Communication

- 1) Uses and Gratification Theory
- 2) Agenda Setting Theory

Theories of Relationships

- The cause-effect principles or theories guide you in understanding how organizations relate to their publics.
 - Systems theory
 - Situational theory

Systems Theory

- **Definition:** The attitudes and actions of an organization or public contribute to a cause-effect chain reaction within their environment.
 - The parts of an organization and public exist in relationship to each other.
 - Meaning the actions of one part affect others.

Applying Systems Theory Public Relations

- Systems theory is especially useful to public relations because it helps the practitioner manage the organization's relationships.
- This theory emphasizes interdependence between an organization and its internal and external environments.

Closed and Open System

- Closed System: Focuses on the history of the organization and makes decisions based on past experiences.
- Open System: Focuses on input from external publics and the organization's external environment.



Situational Theory

- **Definition:** People will act on an issue or situation when they believe it affects them personally and their actions can make a difference.
- **Three variables:**
 - **Problem recognition:** People must be able to see the potential of an issue to affect them personally.
 - **Constraint recognition:** People must see that they can do something about the issue.
 - **Level of involvement:** People must care about resolving the issue.

Two Benefits of Situational Theory

- Helps the practitioner predict when groups will become active or remain apathetic.
- Helps the practitioner create communication strategies for specific publics.

THEORIES OF PERSUASION AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Persuasion and Social influence

Have you ever:

Asked a friend what was appropriate wear to a dinner, party, or wedding?

Agreed to buy something you didn't want?

Agreed to attend a social event because someone else asked you to?

Changed your behavior in response to a direct order from a police officer, parent, teacher, or school official?

Social Influence

- *Social influence* –

a change in overt behavior caused by real or imagined pressure from others

Conformity: Asch's Research

Group Influence

Which of the lines on the left most closely matches line A on the right?



1 2 3

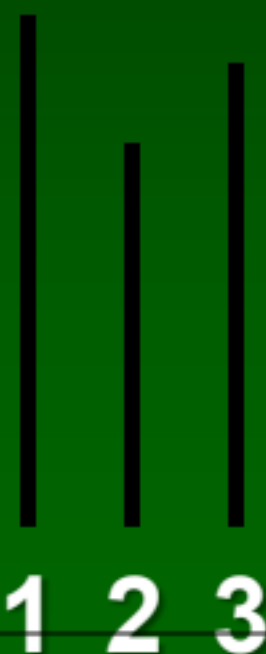
What would you say if you were in a group of 6 others, and all agreed the answer was 3?

A

Conformity: Asch's Research

Group Influence

When alone, 95% of participants got all answers correct.



But 75% went against their own eyes at least once if the group gave a wrong answer.



Conclusion: People faced with strong group consensus sometimes go along even though they think the other may be wrong.

Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory

model

People generally act in ways that they assume will reduce costs and increase rewards.



Social Exchange Theory

- PR practitioners try to make decisions based on the assertion that people will factor in consequences of their behavior before they act.
- Practitioners must try to keep costs low and rewards high in everything from survey responses to product recalls.
- When the situation is complex, the practitioner must employ a pay-off matrix to evaluate all possible decisions and with accompanying costs and rewards.

Pay-off Matrix Example

(Based on Social Exchange Theory) Find Out

Customer
Doesn't

Issue:

Defective lot of screws

**Option 1:
Recall Screws**

<p><u>Rewards</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company tied with quality <p><u>Costs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • money • Initial negative publicity 	<p>N/A</p>
<p><u>Rewards</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive publicity <p><u>Costs</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lose goodwill • negative publicity • law suits • lose customers 	<p><u>Rewards</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no im cost. <p><u>Costs</u></p>

**Option 2:
Ignore Defect**

**United PR
Works**



FirstRanker.com

FirstRanker's choice

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The Firestone Tire Example



- An example of a public relations crisis is the Firestone company.
- Click on the image to read from CNN executives' PR can go bad.

www.FirstRanker.com



FirstRanker.com

FirstRanker's choice

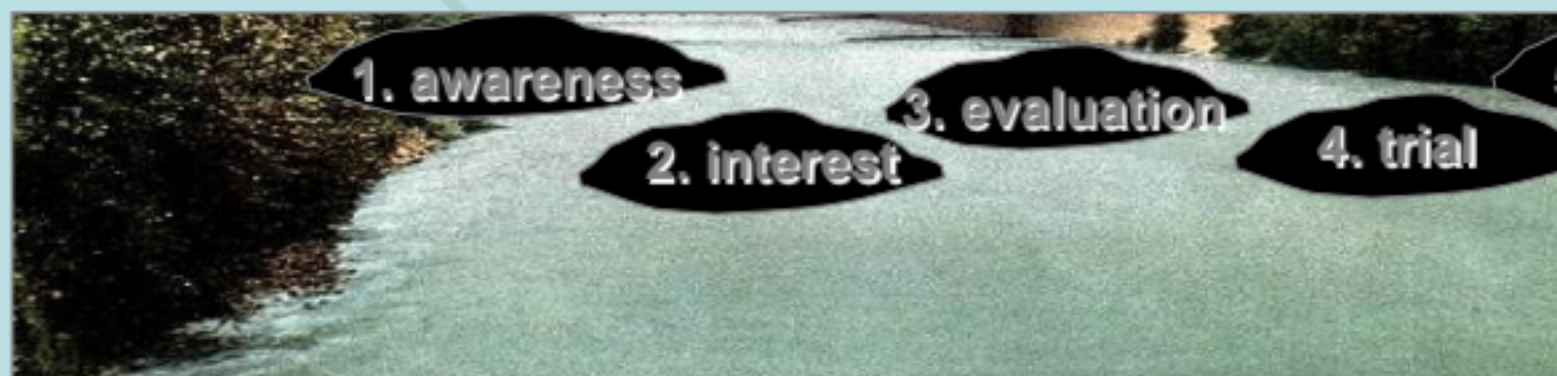
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DIFFUSION THEORY

Diffusion Theory

Individuals can be influenced to diffuse and adopt an idea by going through five stages.



Mass media is useful in the first two stages and personal influence is needed in the two before adoption takes place.

SOCIAL LEARNING THEO

Social Learning Theory

- Personal example and mass media can be important for acquiring new behaviors.
- New behavior is likely to occur when it is seen as potentially rewarding.

*What makes people
change their minds?*

Elaborated Likelihood Model

Elaborated Likelihood Model

- Describes two routes to possible changes in human attitudes and behavior.
- Understanding these two options helps the practitioner devise effective ways to present information.

The Central Route

- In the Elaborated Likelihood Model, the central route of communicating a message presumes that people are interested in your message, will actively think about an issue and will evaluate with an open mind.

But, that's not always the case



The Peripheral Route

- The peripheral route is taken when a receiver is deemed unable or unwilling to think directly about an issue.
- Hence the person is presented with softer cues peripheral to the issue, such as...
 - repetition of the message
 - credible sources
 - rewards or premium

A Summary of Theories of Persuasion and social influence

- **Social Exchange Theory:** people act in ways that reduce costs and increase rewards.
- **Diffusion Theory:** people can be influenced to diffuse and adopt ideas through five stages.
- **Social Learning Theory:** New behavior is likely to occur when it is seen as potentially rewarding.
- **Elaborated Likelihood Model:** message strategies choose between central/peripheral routes based on receiver's motivation to process.

Theories of Mass Communication

- There are two theories that help us understand the powerful influence of media.
 - Use and Gratification Theory
 - Agenda Setting Theory

*How do we define
media*

A Definition of Media

- The English word *media* is a Latin derivative of *medius*, meaning *middle*.
- For our purposes we define media as...
 - *all the means of communication, as newspapers, radio, TV, that provide the public with news, entertainment, etc. usually along with advertising* (Webster's New World C Dictionary, 1999).

Use and Gratification Theor

Use and Gratification Theor

- People are active users of media and choose how and when to use media based on its gratification for them.
- You should research why your particular publics use media. Do they do it...
 - as entertainment
 - to scan the environment for items that are important to them
 - as a diversion
 - as a substitute for personal relationships
 - as a check on self-identity



The connecti

Application for the Practitioner

- The use and gratification theory helps the practitioner explain media effects and the absence of effects.
- The practitioner must remember that because a message is available does not mean that people will pay attention or remember it.

Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda Setting is based on the assumption that although media can't tell people what opinion to hold about an issue, it has influence on what issues people think about.



The Influence of Agenda Setting

- The agenda setting theory proposes media has the potential to:
 - build issue or product awareness
 - increase issue salience(importance)

How do movies, m
affect what issues
discuss?

PR Practitioner Roles

- There are two broad roles found in public relations.
 - **Technician**: The public relations technician is largely involved in implementing the strategies and tactics of a campaign through writing, editing, taking photos, communication production, running special events, and dealing with the media.
 - **Manager**: The public relations manager is a problem solver that uses the PR process to support and implement the goals of the organization.

There are three PR managers

PR Manager Roles

- **Expert Prescriber**: works as a consultant to define a problem, suggest options and oversee implementation.
- **Communication Facilitator**: keeps two-way communication open by spanning the boundary between the organization and its environment.
- **Problem-Solving Facilitator**: works as a partner with senior management to identify and solve problems.

Models of Public Relation

It is useful to examine the four public relations models developed by Jim Grunig to understand the key concepts of PR and how they are related to each other. The models are based on the concepts of communication and research.

- Press Agency model
- Public information model
- Two-way asymmetric model

Press Agency Model

- The practitioner holds to a one-way movement of information from the organization to its publics.
 - This is the oldest form of public relations and relies on persuasion.
- In Grunig's model, the intention often is to deceive the receiver on some level for manipulative purposes.



Public Information Model

- Like press agency, this is a one-way movement of information.
- The intent is to inform rather than promote for promotion and publicity.
 - Often used by government, educational institutions and not-for-profit organizations



Two-way Asymmetric Model

- Organization uses social science research methods to persuade in a two-way exchange of information.
 - This includes the use of surveys, interviews, and focus groups.
 - This model is more interested in influencing publics about the company than influencing the company.



Two-way Symmetric Model

- Organization seeks mutual understanding and influence with its publics rather than one-way persuasion.
- The organization and the public adjust one another.

New Model of Symmetry

In 1995 a new model of public relations was developed. This model is known as the

Model of Symmetry as Two-Way Practice

In this model, the publics and the organization are on a continuum. PR practitioners use both two-way symmetrical and two-way asymmetrical models as needed. The organization and the public seek to persuade each other as much as possible.

Developing Models of Public Relations

Two new models have been developed that fall in the asymmetrical category:

Cultural Interpreter Model: applies to companies that do business in other countries and need to be cognizant of the language, culture, customs and political systems of those countries.

Personal Influence Model: applies to practitioners who try to develop personal relationships with key individuals who can then be contacted as needed by the practitioner.

Approaches to Conflict Resolutions

- Conflict involves an individual or group actively opposing another's values or goals.

Plowman, Briggs, and Huang identified nine of conflict resolution strategies and linked them to the motives of organizations and people.

- **1.Contention:** Involves one party forcing its position on another.
- **2.Cooperation:** Both parties work together to find a mutually beneficial solution.
- **3.Accomodation:** One party partially yields its position and lowers its aspirations.
- **4.Avoidance:** One or both parties leave the conflict either physically or psychologically.



- **5.Unconditional Constructive:** The organization resolves the strategic interests of both the organization and publics.
- **6.Compromise:** An alternative agreed that stands part way between the parties preferred positions..



- **7.Principled:** Both parties hold to high ethics that cannot be compromised.
- **8.Win-Win or No Deal:** Both parties walk off on any agreement until they are ready for the deal to be struck.
- **9.Mediated:** Involves use of an outside disinterested party.

In Summary...

Understanding the theories behind the behavior of an organization's publics is essential for developing strategies and tactics that can help an organization achieve its goals. Modern PR practitioners focus on two-way communication that values the input of the publics as much as the persuasive power of the company.



ASSIGNMENT - 2

- **Short Questions**

- 1. What is the meaning of theory?
- 2. Differentiate between systems theory and situational theory?
- 3. What concept is explained in the Social Exchange Theory?
- 4. State the meaning of diffusion theory.
- 5. What is Social Learning Theory?
- 6. What are the different roles of Public Relations?
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- **Ten Marks Questions**

- 1. Explain in detail the theories of relationship.
- 2. Explain in detail the theories of persuasion and social influence.
- 3. Explain in detail the theories of mass communication.
- 4. Explain briefly the public relations roles.
- 5. Enumerate the different public relations models.
- 6. What are the different approaches to Conflict Resolutions?