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## ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE PROMOTION OF PRINT AND TELEVISION MEDIA IN INDIA

**CHAYA ANILKUMAR, DR.JAGADEESH PRAKASH**

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**Abstract:** Media today is the entity that makes life easier, bridges the gap, fills all voids and makes communication extremely simple, remarkable and substantial. From dawn to dusk we are bombarded with abundant information, advertisements, news and so on. Thanks to mass media which connects people across the globe creating public sphere.

In the era of globalisation and modernisation, the mass media scenario has completely changed. Public Relations has invaded Media Management right from selling editorial space to advertising, paid news, paid features, change in editorial jobs, policy and price war. Paid news is carried with a reporter's by-line. Media marketing is a big business and marketing department personnel in big newspaper gets fat perks for reaching targets as compared to their own editorial staff.

New communication technologies have paved way for the Public Relations industry to groom into the corporate identity and in an 'image building' of an organization. Now every small or big company has corporate communication departments. Public relations practitioner indirectly control and filter messages to reach their target audiences via traditional and digital media.

In this context, this paper will throw light on the changing media scene in India and how public relations has emerged in forefront in building image of organisations/products that are showcased in media in form of advertisements as well as competition within media organisations to capture audience and market with special reference to print and television media.

**Keywords:** Media, Market, Globalisation, Public Relations, India, Advertisements, Ethics.

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**Introduction:** "It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change'-Charles Darwin.

The Print Media owes its origin and growth to the individuals who had in them the courage to lead the nation. The press gradually became the most powerful weapon for freedom movement against colonial rule. All India Radio and Television entered India in 1923 and 1959 respectively which were totally controlled by the Government. Indian cinema started its journey in 1900s as Silent era featuring Mythological films.

The strong belief of our freedom fighters that '**pen is mightier than sword**' and the power of their pen can challenge the political establishment directed the Indian journalism till

date (Justice G.N. Ray). Today, the press has come to occupy an undisputed position as the fourth and the strongest pillar of modern India.

With literacy level rising, the reach and readability of newspapers and magazines, rise in internet, middle-class family, change in life style and digital media have attracted global investors with maximum foreign investment in media. Mass Media vehicles such as Print, television, radio, advertising, public relations, cinema & digital media Communicates and connects masses on Issues and problems from across the globe that are discussed as our own problems.

In the past, Marketing of newspapers was not commercialised and was dictated by ethical aspects and issues. Editorial policy was dictated by the editors who enjoyed complete independence with less interference from the

management. PR professionals looked forward for their company news to get published in the newspapers. Many famous editors ruled the editorial room, made PRO's to wait for hours and begging to accept their press releases. News was 'sacred' and selection of news was based on 'news values'.

The era of globalisation changed the scenario. . The relationships between public relations and press have become inseparable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Anyone with an internet connection can get messages within seconds. This has resulted in a lot of exaggeration, and untruth information and lobbying is very powerful. Now all of the major PR companies have a 'public affairs' or 'government relations' practice. Wiki leaks have demonstrated the power of lobbying in Nira Nadia case.

This issue of media ownership has been widely debated because of the entry of corporate groups and political entry into the mass media. Media conglomerates are ruling the news media and they diversify the profit earned in media to their other business interest or units. Since freedom of the proprietor is the freedom of the press, **the** worry is not around who owns the media or what freedom they give to their staff. But in a way that is consistent with journalistic standards of integrity and fair play.

In order to increase the newspaper circulation & television viewership, public relations is a key tool in creating and designing the various marketing strategies to reach their target audiences.

#### • Objectives:

To assess the marketing mix in Newspaper organisation.

To determine the role of PR in the changing pattern of news values

To study the various PR tools used by print and Television

To analyse the changing pattern of ownership in media

To determine the image building of

organisations/products in media

#### • Methodology

This is a qualitative and analytical study using Secondary Data.

#### • Findings:

##### Part A- Print Media:

##### ➤ Public Relations dictating Editorial Policy, Editorial Space and News Value:

Columns in newspapers are sold to PR professionals to showcase their corporate organisations information as '**news**' which comes with a '**price tag**'. The reader usually does not know the difference. Now editorial marketing is important rather than editorial independence and quality.

'Newspapers once had a mission. But rising costs and competition for readers and viewers to attract advertising have transformed mission to commerce. Media barons prefer **balance sheets** to **news content** and are inclined to cater to corporate needs and cultivation of the political influence that goes with the territory'( **B G Varghese**).

Newspapers are required to have editors who, under the Press Registration Act to carry primary responsibility for all the matter printed, whether news, pictures, editorials, cartoons, letters, articles, commentaries or advertisements. According to Former Editor B G Varghese, editors have disappeared, as in the case of the Times of India group, or have been reduced to being brand managers, high level **public relations men** or "**editorial advisers**".

PR has slowly emerged as '**champion**' in **changing the perception of 'NEWSVALUE'** which are widely taught in the class rooms for budding journalists. They realise later that money can buy or change news value depending upon the news package.

According to research conducted by DilipMandal and R. Anuradha, that has been published in *Media Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2011), the boards of directors of a number

of media companies now include (or have included in the past) representatives of big corporate entities that are advertisers.

Media companies tend to have a variety of professionals on their boards, such as investment bankers, venture capitalists, chartered accountants, corporate lawyers, and CEOs of big companies. Professional journalists rarely figure. As a result, those at the top of the decision-making hierarchy are those for whom the bottom-line, not the by-line, is most important.

Newspaper organizations now-a-days identify themselves as a commercial enterprise and the newspaper as a commodity, rather an institution to serve the society. Intense competition among newspapers and between newspaper and Television are the key factors.

Advertising have become integral part of mass media business. According to Press Council of India guideline, newspapers should carry 60% of news and 40% of advertisements. However we hardly come across any such newspaper following the guideline. Some newspapers now refer to advertising as 'news you can use' or brings out advertorials supplement. Jackets (advertisement) are ruling the print media. Times of India newspaper introduced jackets and advertorial supplements. The measurement of newspaper is now sq.cms as compared to earlier cms and inches

In TOI "celebrities and rich people pay for favorable coverage. They have offered a "private treaty" agreement which accepts an equity stake in a company in return for favorable coverage dismantling the wall between the newsroom and the sales department" with **Times Media Net** (keval J Kumar).

Media Net has eventually given rise to paid news and publicity of celebrities as 'news' in media

which readers do not know the difference. Many products/services of big companies are featured in TV shows, films and free samples/discount coupons are distributed along with newspapers and magazines. This is like pay for one get two publicity offers, killing two birds with one stone.

**Price war:** Many newspaper indulge in unhealthy price war in offering their sister publications with an 'invitation price' or sometimes as complimentary copies. Bangalore Mirror was given as a free supplement along with Times of India for one year. Many newspapers offer annual subscription price for Rs.250 to 300 to increase their circulation. This has drastically affected many local and small newspapers. Attractive free gifts are given along with subscription to lure readers.

➤ **Various Public Relations Tools used by Newspapers to promote circulation**

- **Digital Media:** Print media is fully dependent on Digital Media to increase its readership and to compete with Television. **E-newspapers, News on Mobile, Alive App, SMS Response and social media** provides updated detailed news online to quench the thirst of readers. Advertisers are to benefit more as advertisements appear both online and print. People staying far off places or outside country are not deprived of their favourite newspapers and magazines. Thanks to online edition. Many newspapers carry column- 'notable quotes on social networking sites', highlighting responses to current issues.

**Newspaper in Education (NIE):** Times of India started NIE in schools/colleges. Now many newspaper offer NIE with different offers, programs, workshops etc. to lure students to buy their newspapers which is a marketing & advertising gimmick to increase their circulation.

**Print sector growth during last five years (percentage):**

Print media market	2010	2011	2012	2013	Growth in 2013
English Market	79	83	86	91	5.8%
Advertising	53	57	59	62	5.2%
Circulation	26	26	27	29	7.0%
Hindi Market	58	62	68	75	10.5%
Advertising	37	41	45	50	11.3%
Circulation	21	22	24	26	9.0%
Vernacular Market	56	63	69	76	10.0%
Advertising	36	42	46	51	10.8%
Circulation	20	21	24	26	8.5%
Total print market	193	209	224	243	8.5%

(Source-www.thehoot.org)

**Part B:** The media market in India remains highly fragmented, due to the large number of languages and the sheer size of the country. In the last few years there has been a growing consolidation of media organizations. Media barons are using news outlets as PR tool to build their Image in the society as well as to further their business interests.

The absence of restrictions on cross-media ownership implies that particular companies or groups or conglomerates dominate markets both vertically as well as horizontally. Many political parties are launching their own channels and newspaper. They give news which suit their needs and opinions to ensure that their point of view finds a space in the public domain. The reader gets biased and one sided information which directly or indirectly helps in the structure of political mileage.

The Hyderabad-based ASCI report pointed out that there is “ample evidence of market dominance” in specific media markets and argued in favour of an “appropriate” regulatory framework to enforce cross-media ownership restrictions, especially in regional media markets where there is “significant concentration” and

market dominance in comparison to national markets (for the Hindi and English media).

Many politicians are also holding stakes in many media companies either through the family connection or on board of management. Many media owners themselves are affiliated to political party or their family members are married to politicians/kins of politicians.

Empirical evidence suggests that political concentration in media has a negative effect on diversity. The economic interests of media owners influence their advertising, programming choices, and how they provide access to information. Regulation to ensure a plurality of media ownership is therefore particularly aimed at ensuring a diversity of news provision.

**Part C:**

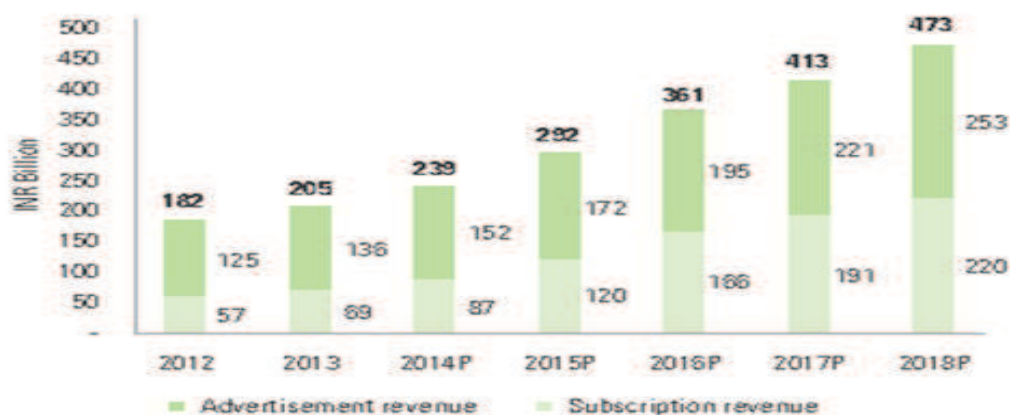
**Television:** Television was started as an experimental basis in India to popularise the government developmental programs. With the invasion of private channels in 1990s changed the broadcasting scenario. Now, we have hundreds of national, regional and international channels broadcasting variety of programmes round the clock.



In order to increase their TRP ratings, channels compete in providing latest breaking news, juicy programs, spicy reality shows, chewing gum soap operas and many other variety programs to hook viewers to TV sets. The program which enjoys high TRPs attracts maximum advertisements and many a times programs having high TRPs are asked by channels to continue the program though producer wants to end it.

Advertisers benefit a lot by sponsoring the program, product launch, featuring goods and service in TV serials & reality shows, providing accessories and costumes to anchors to wear which indirectly help to promote their goods and services. Not to forget sms response from viewers to select their contestants in reality shows which are charged high. Many big companies are also featured in TV programs which indirectly give free publicity as well as image building of organization.

**TV broadcasting industry size: Advertising and subscription revenue**



(Source-www.thehoot.org)

➤ **PR tools used by Print and Television Media:**

- **Hoardings:** Many big newspapers and TV Channels put up Hoardings on prominent places to attract readers/viewers.

**Advertisements:** While many newspapers give advertisements in Television, Radio & its sister publications to promote their newspaper, Television channels advertise in newspaper and magazines.

**Digital Media:** Social media, You Tube, Mobile Apps enables one to catch up with program/news with advertisements popping up.

**Conclusion:** Public relations has invaded in every aspects of newsroom functioning as well as in marketing of the newspaper and television

channels. Though PR has changed the concept of news in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, print media is growing stronger and cheapest in the world. According to a PWC forecast, the Indian newspaper market will be the only one which will grow by double digits CAGR (10%) by 2017. Now, Marketing of newspapers and TV channels is mantra of media owners and corporate business barons look forward to encash it. As Rupert Hearst says, "News is what someone does not want you to print - the rest is advertising" and Noam Chomsky's view that the most important value for the modern press is to deliver audiences for their advertisers holds good for the media as well as business organisations of our country in the 21<sup>st</sup> century!

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Chaya AnilKumar/HOD-Journalism/  
 Bishop Cotton Women's Christian College/Bangalore/  
 Research Scholar/Department of Communication/  
 Bangalore University/Bangalore/  
 Dr.Jagadeesh Prakash/Professor (Research Guide)/  
 Department of Communication/Bangalore University/Bangalore