

INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATIONS



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INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC RELATIONS

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Introduction to Public Relations

Public relations help our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions. It functions more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony.

Public relations serve a wide variety of institutions in society such as businesses, trade unions, government agencies, voluntary associations, foundations, hospitals, schools, colleges, and religious institutions.

To achieve their goals, these institutions must develop effective relationships with many different audiences or publics such as employees, customers, local communities, shareholders and other institutions, and with society at large.

Public relations is about building public relationships. PR involves evaluation of public attitudes and opinions, coordinating of communication programs and fostering a positive relationship between an organization and its public constituents.

This book is to help students in understanding the different skills in public relations. It investigates the different understandings of concepts and knowledge applications about public relations. It focuses on how to improve 'publics' by using different kinds of medias, planning techniques and skills needed to handle different types of publics.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course students should be able to:

- Define and describe public relations as a communication function of organizations
- Describe the public relations process and the interactions among environmental, organizational, communication, and target audience subsystem.
- Understand the legal, ethical, and moral considerations inherent in public reactions.
- Understand and discuss the meaning of public relations as a management function.
- List and describe public relation tools used in the communication subsystem.
- List and describe the characteristic of organization publics.
- Identify the key components of corporate public relations.
- Identify and discuss the public relations function in government.
- Describe the emerging trend and opportunities for a career in public relations.

Academic Planner

The following is a guideline for lecturers to plan the number of lecture hours per chapter based on the content available and its importance. Lecturers are to adjust these hours according to the length of the semester:

Chapter	Topics	Hours
1	Introduction to Public Relations	3
2	The publics in public relations	3
3	Publics and public opinion	3
4	Planning public relations programme	3
5	Communication in public relations	3
6	The ethics and social responsibility in public relations	3
7	Public relations: Employee and consumer relations	3
8	Public relations: Electronic media relations	3
9	Public relations writing: News releases	3
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Chapter 1

1 Public Relations Defined and Distinguished

- Defining public relations
- Public relations activity
- The Public relations process
- Public relations as “management interpreter”
- Public relations as “public interpreter”
- Distinguishing PR
 - PR distinguished from advertising
 - PR distinguished from marketing
 - Comparison between marketing, advertising and PR

Objectives

At the end of this chapter students will be able to:

- Understand different definitions of Public Relations
- Understand the process involved in public relations
- Distinguish public relations with advertising, marketing, and sales promotion

1.1 DEFINING PUBLIC RELATIONS

There are various definitions of public relations. To further understand, let us look at the various definitions of public relations:

‘Public Relations is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics’

According to (British) Institute of Public Relations (IPR) (1998)

Analysis:

- (a) It is *‘planned and sustained effort’* – meaning that PR is a campaign or programme which is a continuous activity, it is not haphazard.
- (b) Its purpose is *‘to establish and maintain mutual understanding’* – that is, to ensure that the organization is understood by others. This mutual understanding is thus between an organization and its publics, since many groups of people are involved.

For example:

For instance, the Ministry of Health Malaysia giving information about health care to the public is an activity that is done continuously. It thus requires a public relations department to handle this. The objective of maintaining goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its people means that public relations is set up so that people would have a positive outlook towards the organization and better understand its existence.



‘Public relations consists of all forms of planned communication, outwards and inwards, between and organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding’

According to Frank Jefkins (1998), Author

Analysis,

(a) This definition, relates to the IPR version and specifies that the purpose is not mutual understanding but achievement of the objectives. When the objectives are reached, it can solve communication problems in the organization such as converting negative attitudes to positive attitudes.

For example:

The *Charity Bike ‘n’ Blade 2007* aims to raise \$500,000 towards the cause “Youth at Risk”. The three beneficiary organizations of this year’s event are Pertapis Centre for Women and Girls, the Ling Kwang Youth Centre for the underprivileged and The Salvation Army’s Youth Programmes which include Gracehaven, a residential home for young people. By putting a target to the project, the public relations department can work towards this target and gear its activities which would help raise the amount stipulated. At the same time, the management can measure the effectiveness of the public relations campaign in Ringgit and Sens. In the event the target is not met, they could perhaps brainstorm on what other activities that could be carried out to meet this target. And if really necessary, they could garner the marketing and research department to help in achieving the target.



1

‘Public relation practice is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organization leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organization’s and the public interest.



According to the Mexican Statement (1998)

Analysis,

(a) The Mexican statement talks about the public affairs and social science aspects of an organization. In this case, it has to do with public relations responsibility to the public interest which gives rise to the idea of the public’s perception of the organization. Hence public relations are about maintaining good relations with the public as well as the organization portraying good reputation in the eyes of the public.

For example:

Komag established a tradition of community support in 1991. As a corporation, KOMAG goal is to support organizations that enhance the quality of life where we do business, whether in the U.S., Malaysia or abroad. Each of our locations has a firm commitment to the region in which it operates. The Company’s Community Relations Program encourages employee participation, both as donors and as volunteers, in non-profit organizations that Komag feels make a difference. KOMAG involvement typically places a strong emphasis on education, technology, health and youth programs. These activities include food drives, blood drives, walk-a-thons, bowl-a-thons and other community-related volunteer projects or activities that appeal to our employees’ personal interests.



1.2 PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY

Public relations consist of different kind of activities carried according to the nature of the business that the company is involved in. The following are some of the public relations activities done by an organization.

Examples of PR activities are:

PR activities	Examples of the activities
<p>Programme Planning</p>	  <p>TM Net and its partner Network Security Solutions (NSS) 15 Feb 2007 announced the launch of its new breakthrough technology “TM Net Xecure Message Service” (TM Net XMS). This is the first mobile software in Malaysia and the world that enables end-to-end security and trust in mobile messaging. The launch was officiated by TM Net’s Chief Executive Officer Michael Lai with NSS’s Head Of Operations Anurana Saluja in attendance</p>
<p>Writing and Editing</p>	 <p>Company writing their own newsletter and house journals for the use of the staff and customer of the company.</p>

<p>Media Relations</p>	 <p>Media relations continue to be one of the most powerful tactics in Public Relations. Sustained, planned and long-term delivery of the right message to your target audience - across any medium - can help you to gain desired market share, sell product or service, raise awareness and create a competitive advantage.</p>
<p>Corporate Identity</p>	 <p>This will take many forms according to the nature of the business. For example, Cosmopoint Sdn. Bhd. uses the above symbol as a corporate identity for a company involved in education field.</p>
<p>Special Events</p>	 <p>Engaging in sponsorship for example for the arts, sports, expeditions, university fellowships, causes and charities sometimes can generate goodwill. In Malaysia, Milo sponsors special events such as Majlis Sukan-Sukan Malaysia to increase their public concern about importance of sports.</p>
<p>Research and Evaluation</p>	<p>PR also involves research and evaluation. PR people are the ones who inform their publics about research and evaluation being conducted by their company. For example, Ministry of Malaysia has introduced a research on world first's Integrated Palm Bio diesel.</p> 

<p>Attending Conferences</p>	 <p>PR people also sometimes have to represent their company to attend conferences outside as well as in the organization itself. For example, Malaysians attends conferences outside the country to inform foreigners about Malaysian food and beverages.</p>
<p>Exhibition and Trade Show</p>	 <p>Public relations officers also attend exhibitions and trade shows conducted by other companies. For example, MAS airlines, Air Asia send their people to participate in MATTA exhibition.</p>
<p>Acting as a client's spokesperson</p>	 <p>Sometimes, if the Public Relations officer is being paid to provide services, they will act as a client's spokesperson. Or if the person is being paid to work with the company, he or she will be act as company's spokesperson. For example, Dato' Syed Zainal Abidin bin Syed Mohamed Tahir, the Managing Director of Proton Berhad act as a spokesperson for the company to introduce new products of Proton.</p>

Crisis Communication

Public relations also require other activity like acting as a crisis communicator for the company to resolve problems in the company. For example, Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Abdullah

Ahmad Badawi acts as a crisis communicator regarding the rise of price of petrol in Malaysia.

1.3 PUBLIC RELATIONS PROCESS**1.3.1 The traditional four-step model of the public relations process**

Public relations is the process of communicating and building relationships with groups of people to help the organization to reach its goals. In other words, it's about doing something newsworthy that you want to communicate, and then telling your audience (or every likely, several audiences) what you have done. Most of public relations experts agree that public relations is conducted within the framework of a four-step process.

A variety of names have been used to describe the four steps of the public relations process. Some have favoured the use of acronyms such ROPE (research, objective, planning and evaluation) and RACE (research, action, communication, evaluation).



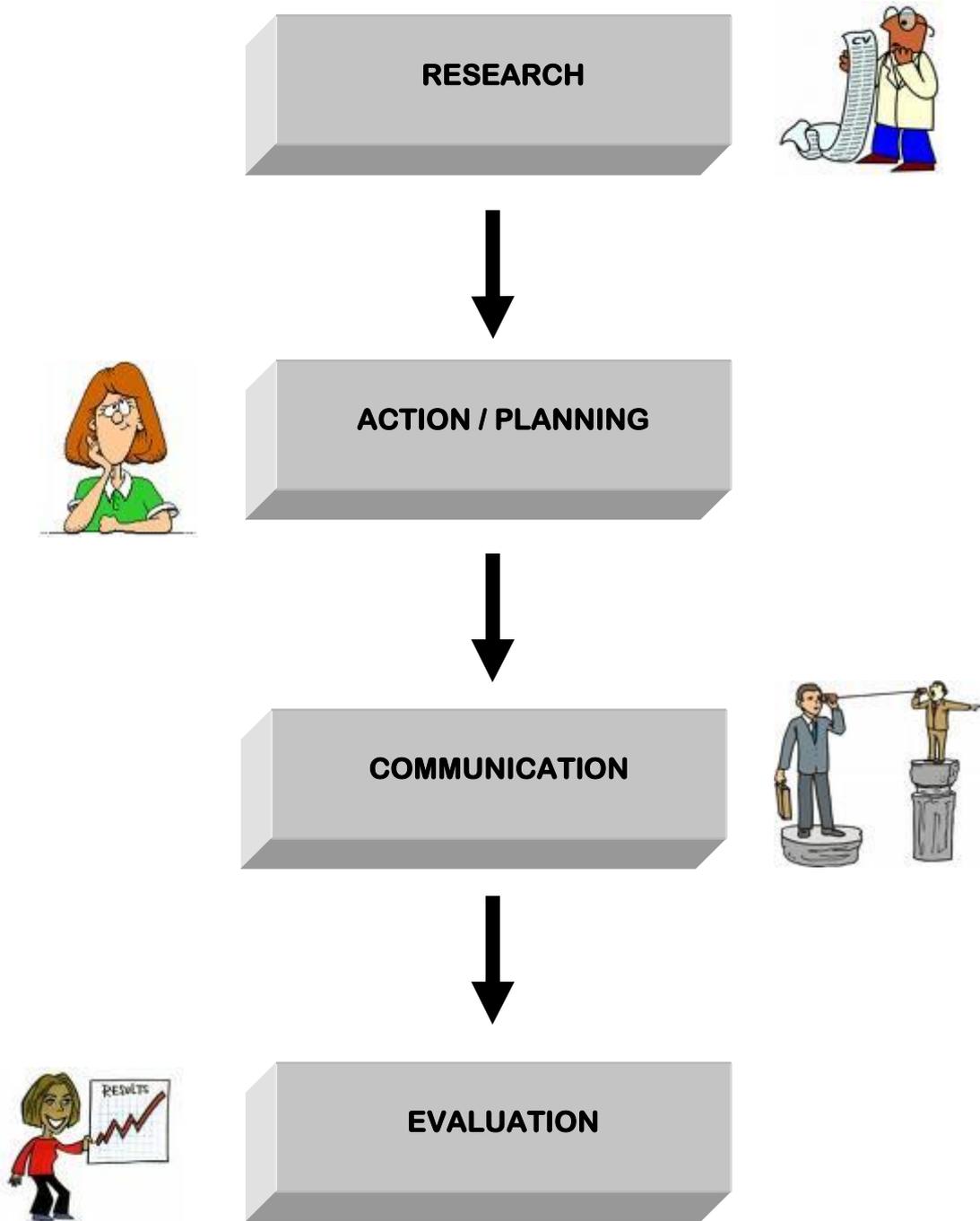
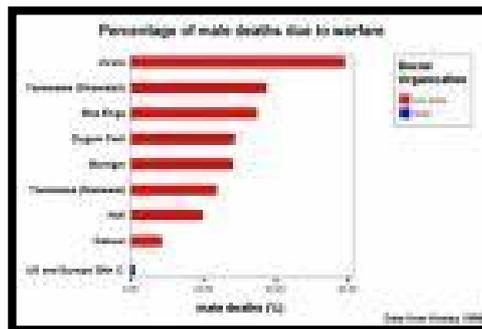


Figure 1: The traditional Four-Steps Model of the Public Relations process

Basically, RACE means that public relations activity consists of four key elements:

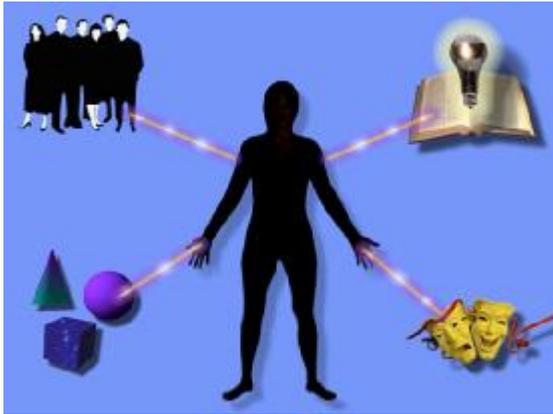
- **Research.** Research is the discovery phase of a problem-solving process: practitioner's use of formal and informal methods of information gathering to learn about an organization, the challenges and opportunities it faces, and the publics important to its success. There are several methods that PR practitioners can use to gather information about the problems. Some of the techniques used to gather information about problems are by conducting questionnaires session, interviewing people who are directly involved in the problem, by assessing the statistics for example company's sales statistics and many more.



- **Action / Planning.** Planning is the strategy phase of the problem-solving process, in which practitioners use the information gathered during research. From that information, they develop effective and efficient strategies to meet the needs of their clients or organizations. In the planning process, PR practitioners will carefully plan for the adequate budgets for the projects, allocation of human resources, and other considerations.



- **Communication.** Communication is the execution phase of public relations process. This is where practitioners direct messages to specific publics in support of specified goals. But good plans are flexible: Because changes can occur suddenly in the social or business environment, sometimes it is necessary to adjust, overhaul, or abandon the planned strategies. It is worth repeating here that effective communication is two-way, involving listening to publics as well as sending them messages. For example, the company conducting a press conferences gives information about their new products and services. Other than that, the company informing their staff of the company's new policies through the use of company's newsletter.



- Evaluation.** Evaluation is the measurement of how effectively and efficiently a public relations effort met the organization's goals. For example, a company conducts a press conference to inform their publics about the company's new launched products. The activity will be evaluated to identify whether the programme is successful according to the company's aims or not.



1.4 PUBLIC RELATIONS AS "MANAGEMENT INTERPRETER"



Every organization has its own publics and basically public relations deal with almost everyone in an organization. Public exists in every organization whether the organization wants it or not. Public relations affect almost everyone who has contact with other people. All of us, in one way or another, practice public relations daily. For an organization, every phone call, every letter, every face-to-face encounter is a public relations event.

Public relations professionals are really the organization's interpreter. They must interpret the philosophies, policies, programs, and practices of their management to the public and they also must convey the attitudes of the public to their management. Public relations professional have to know what management is thinking before they can gain attention, understanding, acceptance and actions from target audiences.

An organization’s public relations staff is impotent without firsthand knowledge of the reasons for management’s rationale and decisions for organizational policy. The public relations department in any organization can counsel management. It can advise management because they have the power and influence that usually result from access to top management, which uses advice and recommendation to formulate policy. That is why public relations, as well as other staff functions, is located high in the organizational chart and is called upon by top management to make reports and recommendations on issues affecting the entire company. But it is management who must make the decisions on organizational policy. It is the role of the public relations practitioner, once policy is established by management, to communicate these ideas accurately and candidly to the public.

Public relations serve as “Management Interpreter” since they perform two important activities in the public relations activities such as:

- PR professionals interpret the policies, philosophies, programs and practices involved in their management to the public. It is the responsibility of PR professionals to inform its publics about their company’s policies, philosophies and so on.
- PR professionals inform and convey attitudes and behaviours of the public to their management. PR professional also assess the behaviour of their publics, such as the publics’ needs, preferences, and then they need to report or inform their management about the publics’ behaviours.

1.5 PUBLIC RELATIONS AS “PUBLIC INTERPRETER”

PR practitioners must understand and interpret the public opinions to management. Interpreting the public to the management means finding out what the public really thinks about the firm and letting management know.

In order for PR practitioner to act as a “public interpreter”, they should conduct assessments to find out the exact behaviour, opinions and attitudes of the public towards the company. The behaviours, opinions and attitudes can be obtained by conducting surveys, research, distributing questionnaires, and perhaps conducting interview sessions with the publics.



The following examples in history illustrate what can happen when powerful institution’s and their public relations department fail to anticipate the true sentiments of the publics.

- As the 20th century ended, American President, Clinton forgot the candid communication skills that earned him the White House and lied to the American public about his affair with an intern. The subsequent scandal, ending in impeachment hearings before the U.S. Congress, tarnished Clinton's administrations and ruined his legacy.
- In the midst of the smog shrouding many parts of the country, Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak decreed (NST, June 25, 2004) that the true accounting of the haze in Malaysia must be kept secret as the real figures (of the Air Pollutant Index [API]) would be 'distorted by the foreign media' and, consequently would be damaging to the country's economy.
- This government move, although not terribly unexpected, risks the health of the Malaysian citizens at the expense of monetary gains. Moreover, it makes a mockery of that much touted slogan of yesteryear, 'Caring Society'. Malaysian citizens have the right to know the real situation of the haze, especially if and when the pollutant index reaches a dangerous level. It is crucial that they know the reality so that they can be prepared for any eventuality. This is certainly not a matter of 'what you don't know won't hurt you'. Besides, hiding the API from the full view of locals as well as the foreign media will only fuel unnecessary speculation and set the rumour mills in motion. Fear can be easily magnified among the people when there are no hard facts and figures to rely on. Furthermore, putting the API under the Official Secrets Act (OSA) only reinforces the suspicion that the government is often happy to keep vital information away from public domain. This has always been the concern of many critics of the government when the OSA was tightened further in the recent past.



1.6 DISTINGUISHING PUBLIC RELATIONS

1.6.1 PR distinguished from advertising

According to the (British) Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA):

'Advertising presents the most persuasive possible selling message to the right prospects for the product or service at the lowest possible costs'

Analysis:

- (a) 'Advertising present the most persuasive possible selling message', achieved by using the creative skills of illustrations, typography, scriptwriting, video-making and copywriting to attract customers. For example, mobile phone operator, Digi Malaysia uses distinctive corporate colour such as yellow, and uses interesting wording such as "I will follow you" as their slogan to attract users to use their services.



(b) A major relationship between Public Relations and Advertising is that advertising is prone to succeed when PR activities has been implemented which created knowledge and understanding of the product or service being used.



(c) Advertising is just one component or subset of marketing. Researchers concluded that advertising and PR activity, each has its own impact on consumers and these impacts interact to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviours.

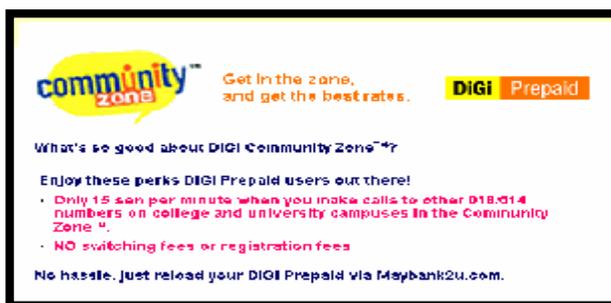


Figure 2: Example of advertising campaign used by DiGi Malaysia

1.6.2 How does Public Relations differ from Advertising?

PUBLIC RELATIONS	ADVERTISING
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public relations role is informing, educating and creating understanding through knowledge. PR involves bigger activities where PR relates to the communication of the overall organization. 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertising present the most persuasive possible selling message through the creative skills such as copywriting, illustration, layout, typography and other characteristics. The main functions of advertising are to attract publics to buy their products or services.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR uses different communication tools such as brochures, slide presentations, special events speeches, news releases and many more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising works almost exclusively through mass media outlets. Through the use of banners, radio and television advertisement, newspapers advertisement and so on.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR presents its message only to specialized <i>external</i> publics such as stockholders, vendors, community leaders, environmental groups and also their <i>internal</i> public, (employee) too 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising is used to address external publics mainly for consumers of the goods and services. The aim is to get the attention of the external publics to buy their products or services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the budget is spent on the time, whether this is represented by staff salaries or by a consultancy fees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the budget is spent on media and production costs. Cost spent on media such as fees to include advertisement in television, radio and newspaper.

Figure 3: The differences between public relations and advertising

1.7 PR DISTINGUISH FROM MARKETING

1.7.1 PR distinguished from marketing

According to Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM, British):

‘Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably’

Analysis:

- (a) Professional marketing management is responsible for finding out exactly what the market needs and its requirements (through the absence of some product or service, which people would buy if they were supplied) and at the same time make a profit to the organization.
- (b) Top management has a full responsibility to market their products or services professionally, not just about selling their goods or services haphazardly. It requires proper planning about how they will market their products or services.
- (c) Marketers and PR practitioners have a lot in common. Either in private or commercial world, PR and advertising will be associated with marketing. This is because



marketing is only one function of a business, while PR also has to do with the production and financial functions too.

(d) Both marketing and PR bear some degree of communication and goodwill. Market education can be a vital PR contribution, on which the success of advertising may well depend on.

(e) The best way to distinguish between advertising and marketing is to think of marketing as a pie, inside that pie, you have slices of advertising, market research, media planning, public relations, product pricing, distributions, sales strategy, and community involvement. Advertising only refers to one piece of the pie in the strategy. All of these elements must not only work independently, but they also must work together towards the bigger goals.



1.7.2 How does Public Relations differ from marketing?

PUBLIC RELATIONS	MARKETING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PR role of informing, educating, and creating understanding through knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer requirement profitably.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public relations is planned process to influence public opinion, through sound character and proper performance, based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional marketing management makes itself responsible for finding out precisely what the market needs (and this may be the absence of some products or services which people would buy if it was supplied) and for satisfying this need if it can be done at a profit.

Figure 4: The differences between public relations and marketing

1.7.3 Comparison between PR, marketing and advertising



According to Guth David W. and Marsh Charles editors of *Public Relations A Value-Driven Approach*, 3rd edition, each term represents a distinct discipline:

PUBLIC RELATIONS	MARKETING	ADVERTISING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PR concerns with the management of relationship between an organization and its publics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Marketing is the process of researching, creating, refining, and promoting a product or service and distributing that product or service to targeted publics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Advertising is the use of media that can be controlled (usually paid for the private use or for the privilege of dictating message content, placement, and frequency) in an attempt to influence and persuade the actions of targeted publics

Figure 5: The comparison between PR, Marketing, and Advertising.

1

Last week, our customer, Mr. Lim complained about our delay in delivering our goods. What do you think is the best way of handling this issue?



Mr. Ahmad, I need to know why my order cannot be delivered on time.

In the office

Actually, we have a problem with our machines and this is the maintenance report on the problem. We have been facing some technical problems and we promise you that this will not happen again. We are willing to offer you a 5% discounts on our goods.



Ok. Thank you.

Lunch with Mr. Lim

These pictures depict the use of Public Relations in handling office problems

1.8 SUMMARY

Public relations is the process of communicating and building mutual understanding between different people in the organization. PR relate to any organisation, non commercial and private sectors. PR is often confused with advertising, marketing, promotion or any of a dozen other buzz words in the marketing communicating vocabulary. Examples of PR activities involved are programme planning, writing and editing, media relations, corporate identity, public speaking, production, special events and many more.

Public relations serves as public interpreter since they performs two components of activities in public relations activities such as interpret the policies, philosophies, programs and practices involved in their management as well as inform and convey attitudes and behaviours of the publics to their management. Public relations serve as a public interpreter since they will be able to know what are the public's opinion and attitudes towards the company and convey the message to the management. Besides, public relations consists of several processes namely the process of research and analysis, policy formation, programming, communication, feedback and program assessment and readjustment.

Public relations uses different kinds of communication tools such as company newsletter, speeches, special event and many more to convey and educate their publics while advertising exclusively uses mass media to perform their activity such as uses televisions and radios to advertise their products and services. Lastly, PR should be concerned with all the publics of the organizations, not only external publics but also their internal publics, whereas the marketing functions should communicate with the markets in order to distribute their goods and services.

1.9 QUESTION

Section A: Short answer questions.

1. What is the IPR definition of public relations?
2. Explain the definition of Public Relations according to the Mexican statement.
3. What are differences between IPR definition and Mexican definitions of public relations?
4. What is the IPA definition of advertising?
5. What is the CIM definition of marketing?
6. Why are marketing and public relations different? Discuss the differences.
7. What are the six steps in public relations process?

Section B: Essay questions.

1. How do Public Relations support marketing? Some experts say that Public Relations can launch a new product or service better than advertising. Do you agree or disagree? What are your thoughts?
2. There are many definitions of Public Relations. Which definition do you prefer? Why?