

THE INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS ON PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS, INNOVATION AND REPUTATION

Karen A. Blotnicky, Mount Saint Vincent University

Amy Thurlow, Mount Saint Vincent University

ABSTRACT

Drawing on survey data gathered from senior public relations officers within Canadian organizations, this paper explores the extent to which the integration of the public relations function in strategic decision-making impacts the achievement of positive organizational outcomes. Three measures of organizational performance were used to investigate these relationships: practitioners' perceptions of organizational success, innovativeness, and external reputation. This research reveals that a strategic public relations / communications management focus by senior organizational management has a positive influence on an organization's innovativeness.

JEL: L20, M19, M31

KEYWORDS: Public Relations, Strategic Decision-Making, Organization Success, Organizational Innovation, Reputation Management

INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the integration of public relations/communications in the upper level strategic management of Canadian organizations. The emphasis of this research is on two aspects of the public relations/communications relationship within organizational management: the extent to which it factors into high level strategic decision making and the degree to which it is integrated and coordinated with other functional areas of strategic management. This research also addresses the extent to which public relations/communications contributes to perceptions of organization success, innovation and external reputation. Extant literature in this area has not adequately addressed the nature of this relationship, leaving gaps in our understanding of the value of strategic public relations within organizational decision-making. This investigation of practitioner access to organizational decision-making and the corresponding influence on organizational innovativeness contributes to a growing literature addressing the role of public relations in terms of the organizational bottom line. This paper makes an important contribution to the public relations literature as it offers an empirical investigation of the relationship between public relations practice and organizational outcomes. This paper begins by situating the current research within the literature by way of a literature review. This study employed a multi-stage research methodology building on findings from a global study of the practice of public relations. This is presented in the next section that describes data and methodology and that lists the hypotheses tested in this quantitative research. The results of the research are organized and reported by methods used to analyze the data. The first part of the results describes the public relations field in Canada as well as the integration of public relations/communications into the executive suites in Canadian organizations. The next section reports results of a factor analysis and three logistic regressions that were used to test the hypotheses. The paper concludes with closing comments and recommendations for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the introduction of findings from the landmark Excellence Study (Grunig, 1992), the importance of access to the organization's dominant coalition, or key decision-making unit, is a consistent theme in the public relations literature (i.e. Berger, 2005; Bowen, 2009; Bowen, 2015; Grunig, L. 1992; Plowman, 1998). Without a strategic focus within organizational decision-making, public relations practitioners are relegated to the role of fire-fighters or promoters, with no long-term impact on stakeholder relationships and strategic communication planning. As Larissa Grunig points out, "The power-control perspective says that organizations do what they do because the people with the most power in the organization – the dominant coalition- decide to do it that way... Public Relations has a better chance of being excellent, it follows, if the senior communication manager is a member of that coalition (1992, p. 483)."

More recently, scholars such as Holtshausen and Voto (2002) and Berger (2005) have been critical of this call for increased access to the dominant coalition, suggesting that public relations practitioners require some distance from organizational decision-making so that they can serve as activist voices and better represent minority publics. Critical public relations scholars further argue that more in-depth work on the conceptualization of power in this field is required. For example, Edwards (2006, 2009) calls for stronger theoretical understandings of power as a form of social capital, and greater reflection on the social power, which public relations practitioners employ with regard to organizational interests.

However, the 'excellence' perspective is still maintained within the profession as the gold-standard of practice. Excellence theory explicitly states among its generic principles of excellent public relations practice that: a) public relations must be involved in the organization at a level of strategic management and b) public relations must be empowered in the dominant coalition or through a direct reporting relationship, to senior management (Grunig, 1992). Grunig (2006) himself has responded to these criticisms as reflecting an "incorrect interpretation of the excellence theory and of the concept of a dominant coalition" (p.164). The public relations and communication (PR/COMM) function in organizations typically includes internal communication, external communication, media relations, reputation management and stakeholder relationships. Nevertheless, the complexity of organizational functions outside of the PR/COMM department were noted by Moss et al (2000) as reasons why the PR/COMM function may be excluded from upper level decision-making in some organizations (Moss, Warnaby & Newman, 2000, p.298). Executives outside of the PR/COMM function may believe that PR/COMM practitioners are not familiar with other functional areas and may leave them out of the decision-making process.

Moss et al (2000) noted that the participation of PR/COMM practitioners in strategic management processes in UK firms was heavily influenced by how highly they were regarded by their Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and other top ranked executives. In addition, highly trusted and regarded PR/COMM practitioners were often very familiar with the other aspects of the organizational functions outside of the communications area (p.19). The growth of stakeholder involvement in many organizations has both legitimized the role of PR/COMM in managing organizations and has had an impact on the extent to which the practitioners are consulted for high level strategic decisions (p.23). Despite this level of involvement, operational and financial issues still provide barriers that function to limit PR/COMM access to strategic decisions in United Kingdom (UK) firms (p.299). Moss et al (2000) noted that "strategy making was often a strongly financially orientated process" (p.298). Having a direct reporting relationship to the top-ranking executive does not necessarily mean that PR/COMM practitioners are involved in the actual decision-making process. PR/COMM was not always considered a "strategic function" which limited the actual degree of input into top-level management decisions (Moss et al, 2000, p.300). Being at the table during the decision-making process does not guarantee actual input into the decision or that the information provided by the party is considered to be strategic or important:

“Public relations is seen as a service to the business, it has a strategic value, but only to support what the business wants to do. It isn’t seen as a strategic function in its own right.” (p.300) Smith and Place (2013) viewed the integration of public relations into the strategic management process as a function of power, which may be impacted by the value of unique skill sets that PR/COMM practitioners bring to the table. This reflects what Moss et al (2000) concluded: PR/COMM practitioners are primarily involved in tactical decisions relating to public relations activities that can directly impact a firm’s performance (p.300). However, the unique competencies held by many PR/COMM practitioners are directly linked to their primary areas of responsibility and may not easily translate into other functional areas of the business, or they may be perceived by others in the executive (C-suite) as not relevant to non-communications functions in the organization. Smith and Place (2013) noted that “power in public relations is considered a function of one’s capacity for influence” (p.169). They asserted that specialist knowledge, such as that related to digital media, may increase the value of the PR/COMM practitioner’s strategic role, and ultimately result in greater power (influence) (p.171). This knowledge-based expertise provided a base from which PR/COMM practitioners could lead in an integrated organization (p.176). Smith and Place (2013) claimed that PR/COMM practitioners can gain power through “value creation”, which happens when tactical contributions of practitioners result in noticeable gains in terms of financial results or the achievement of measurable goals relating to marketing strategies or media plans (p.177).

To some extent PR/COMM practitioners have been given control over the PR/COMM process to enable them to create such value (p.178). The power-control perspective asserts that those who hold power within the organization, those known as the dominant coalition, control what it does simply because they hold the power to do so. Therefore, to rise to that level of influence would require that PR/COMM practitioners become part of that dominant coalition (Grunig, 1992). It remains unclear as to how highly ranking PR/COMM practitioners can become part of the dominant coalition because it is not at all clear how they may increase their capacity for influence. The public relations scholarship regarding possible links between the PR/COMM function and innovation in an organization offers some insight into the connection between the successful implementation of organizational innovations and communication. Friedmann & Maurer (2003) point out that, for the most part, the implementation of innovations has been ineffective. Zerfass & Huck (2007) further explain that a major reason for this is the lack of professional communication within the innovation process (p. 108). Foundational work in the area of innovation communication has emerged in Spain, Finland, Sweden and the United States (Mast, Huck, & Zerfass, 2006; Huck, 2006; Mast & Zerfass, 2005; Zerfass, Sandhu, & Huck, 2004; Meseguer, 2004; Kauhanen, 2005; Nordfors, 2004). Further research in this area is required to provide a more complete understanding of the relationship between communication and innovation. Much of the research regarding innovation in PR/COMM relates to innovative practices in the application of the PR/COMM function, relating to media management, crisis management, enhanced communication, and social media (Taylor & Kent, 2010; Wright & Hinson, 2013). It is possible that by adding innovative ideas and approaches PR/COMM practitioners may enhance their influence enough to become part of the dominant coalition.

Research has shown that practitioners who use innovative PR/COMM tools (for example some applications of digital media platforms) may enjoy more power and influence in their organizations, resulting in a greater responsibility for decision-making at the organizational level (Diga & Kelleher, 2009; Sallot, Porter, & Acosta-Alzuru, 2004). An emergent and growing area of research has focused on digital innovation within organizations (see Nambisan et al, 2017). Digital innovation provides a more nuanced literature on the specific organization of innovation within a context of digital communication. This includes an expanded discussion about the boundaries in which innovation may occur. Extant literature linking PR/COMM perceptions of organizational success tends to link specific PR/COMM functions to reputation management or stakeholder involvement (Doorley & Garcia, 2015). The underlying premise in most research is that best practices in PR/COMM should result in stakeholder involvement which is seen as important to create a strong positive reputation, which should then result financial success for the firm (Yungwook, 2001). This view, reflecting the goal attainment perspective, is based on the assumption that: “...a public relations goal

does not equal its contribution to the bottom line, but public relations can contribute to the bottom line by achieving its goals.” (p.5). It is possible that the goal attainment perspective has focused PR/COMM practitioners on their craft, apart from their role in the organization as a whole. Also, it is possible that this perspective has influenced non-PR/COMM managers and executives into adopting the view that public relations is a contributing function, but not necessarily a key component of C-suite strategic decision-making. Further work on the role of PR/COMM within organizations in relation to dynamic and contested communication environments highlights the value of the communication function in ambiguity (Scandellus & Cohen, 2016; Jarzabkowski, Sillince & Shaw, 2010). This perspective suggests that the PR/COMM function is useful to the organization as it navigates “strategic ambiguity” (Eisenberg, 2007). In these situations, PR/COMM managers are rarely able to directly address role and goal expectations, as this would lead to polarization of outcomes among stakeholders (Ihlen, 2018). Instead, they rely on indirect forms of influence or ‘context control’ which leads to indirect interventions which are most promising “for favorable results to develop by themselves, in accordance with their own self-dynamics” (Nothhaft, 2010, p.136).

Although this work on strategic ambiguity has not linked the PR/COMM function to the organizational bottom line, we can refer again to the work of Yungwook (2001) which further identifies a relationship between public relations’ contribution to the organization and outcomes such as innovation in organizational culture and reputation management. Both of these elements are identified as contributors to the broader category of organizational success. Likewise, there is little scholarship on the relationship between the PR/COMM function per se and financial rewards as indicators of organizational success, as perceived by the PR/COMM practitioner. However, there has been some research which attempts to quantify the financial worth of the PR/COMM function by focusing on a cost/benefit analysis, or return on investment (Grunig, 2006). Is the function worthwhile given its cost to the firm? Yungwook (2001) again demonstrated that the amount spent on public relations expenses was positively related to a firm’s reputation, its market share, and revenues among Fortune 500 companies. When looking at public relations from a purely financial model it proved to be a good investment. However, such research continues to regard public relations as a service function and not as a critical input to the strategic management process.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The goal of this paper is to explore the extent to which senior involvement of PR/COMM functions characterize Canadian organizations that have desirable characteristics. This study examined the role of C-suite engagement of PR/COMM, the integration of the function in strategic management of the organization, and the achievement of positive organizational outcomes. Positive outcomes include the organization’s level of innovation and success and establishing a positive external reputation. If the involvement of the PR/COMM function in upper level strategic management is beneficial for the organization, it should show strong measures of performance. Three measures of organizational performance were used to measure these relationships. These performance measures were organizational success, innovativeness, and external reputation, as rated by top-ranking PR/COMM practitioners. Based on the literature six hypotheses were created that addressed the integration and coordination of PR/COMM into the functional areas or organizational management and the extent to which PR/COMM was integrated into senior strategic organizational management. The hypotheses appear in Table 1.

Table 1: Research Hypotheses

H1: Integrating the PR/COMM function into senior strategic decision-making will have a positive influence on an organization's success.
H2: Integrating the PR/COMM function into senior strategic decision-making will have a positive influence on organizational innovativeness.
H3: Integrating the PR/COMM function into senior strategic decision-making will result in a good external reputation.
H4: Coordinated and integrated PR/COMM processes will have a positive influence on an organization's success.
H5: Coordinated and integrated PR/COMM processes will have a positive influence on organizational innovativeness.
H6: Coordinated and integrated PR/COMM processes will result in a good external reputation

This table lists the research hypotheses to be tested.

The data used in this research was obtained as part of the eighth iteration of a larger study called the Generally Accepted Practices in Public Relations (GAPVIII) (Canada) Study conducted during the winter of 2013/14. The GAPVIII study is part of a large international research project designed to track the growth of the public relations/communications industry, focusing on best practices (Thurlow, Kushniryk, Blotnicky, & Yue, 2014). The GAP study is conducted biannually in the United States by the University of Southern California Annenberg. The survey is conducted simultaneously in Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States. The GAP VIII study was the first one to collect Canadian data in partnerships with the Canadian Public Relations Foundation. Data were collected using an online survey and are available to members of the research team (including these authors) for further analysis. This paper focuses specifically on the Canadian arm of the study.

Key respondents were sampled through two leading professional organizations in Canada: The Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) and the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). This resulted in 197 survey responses and 122 useable responses made up the complete survey sample. This sample was used to complete the first phase of the analysis for this research, consisting of a Factor Analysis. To reduce the variability for the second phase of this research, which consisted of a regression analysis, the sample was reduced to include only for-profit firms and government organizations that were responsible for planning and implementing public relations and communications plans for their own organizational use. Private companies publicly held companies, and government agencies were included in the second phase analysis, resulting in 62 firms for inclusion in the study. Over half of the 62 firms were either publicly traded (24.2%) or privately held (32.3%). The remaining 43.5% of the sample consisted of government departments or agencies (43.5%). Over 90% of the organizations were headquartered in Canada. Organizations that did public relations or communications plans for other organizations (such as public relations agencies), non-profit organizations, and associations, were not included in the final analysis.

The PR/COMM practitioners in the final sample for this paper consisted of 62 individuals who were the highest-ranking public relations/communications professionals in their organizations, some of whom had considerable managerial responsibility. Fifty-three percent were the most senior communications professionals in their organizations and 18% reported to the most senior communications professional. The remaining responders either reported to a senior communications executive or were the most senior internal communications professional in their organization. Most of the respondents were female (70%) and 70% of the sample ranged in age from 20 to 50 years. Over 95% had university level education and more than one-third had completed postgraduate or graduate level education. Educational backgrounds included degrees in communications (13%), business administration (8%), or journalism (16%), and over half had taken formal executive-level training in public relations, communications, business administration or a related field. Each of these respondents was considered a key informant for the analysis of the PR/COMM function in their respective organizations.

The GAPVIII global survey used a seven-point semantic differential scale to measure PR/COMM professionals' perceptions of their organization. These measures captured respondents' perceptions of innovativeness, success, and external reputation. The survey also used eight Likert-scaled measures to capture professionals' perceptions of the PR/COMM function in the organization. These measures, rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1) Strongly disagree to 7) Strongly agree, are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: PR/COMM Practitioners' Perceptions of Innovativeness, Success and External Reputation in Their Own Organizations

Survey Measures
Appropriateness of the reporting line for the PR/COMM function
Level of seriousness with which PR/COMM recommendations were treated by senior management (CEO, chairperson, Chief Operations Officer (COO))
Degree of active participation of PR/COMM in long-term organization-wide strategic planning
Degree to which senior management believed that PR/COMM contributed to fair stock value
Degree to which senior management believed that PR/COMM contributed to the organization's financial success
Level of coordination and integration of PR/COMM functions (eg: media relations, corporate communications, etc.)
Level of coordination and integration of PR/COMM department with others (eg: finance, law, operations, etc.)
Level of coordination and integration between PR/COMM and marketing functions

This table lists measures used to capture the perceptions of PR/COMM professionals in evaluating their own workplaces based on organizational innovativeness, organizational success, and organizational external reputation in the GAPVIII global survey. (Thurlow et al.,2014)

In the first stage of data analysis the eight statements shown in Table 2 were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis, thereby reducing the number of variables to manage a sample size limitation. The full sample of PR/COMM practitioners (n=122) was used for the factor analysis. The Factor Analysis was conducted using principal components extraction with a varimax rotation. The analysis resulted in uncorrelated factors, thereby eliminating multicollinearity among the independent variables, which could confound the logistic regression. Factors were extracted until a cut-off of Eigenvalue = 1. The cut-off for factor loadings was limited to .50 to provide sample power of .80 with $\alpha = .05$ for the sample size of 122 (Hair et al, 2008). Correlation analysis, the Kaiser/Meyer/Olsen Measure of Sampling Efficiency, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to confirm that the data was suitable for factor analysis. In the second stage of this research direct entry binary logistic regression was used to test the hypotheses. Logistic regression does not require multivariate normality and was a better choice of technique given the resulting distribution of the data. Factor scores from the exploratory factor analysis conducted in the first stage of the analysis were regressed against PR/COMM practitioners' perceptions of organizational success. The sample size for the regression analysis was reduced to 62 organizations that managed their own in-house PR/COMM. McFadden's R^2 , a pseudo R^2 measure for use with logistic regression, was used to determine the strength of the regressions and odds ratios and probability measures were used to interpret statistically significant regression associations.

RESULTS

Overall, Canadian public relations practitioners in this study indicated increased access to their organizations' dominant coalitions, and more consistent access to this group, than reported by American and European practitioners (i.e. Swerling, 2014). Canadian practitioners further indicated that they retained responsibility within their organizations over core responsibilities for key areas of communication including social media and media relations. Further, study results suggest that decision-making for key communication responsibilities differed depending upon the sector in which respondents were employed. For example, those working for private companies had authority for planning and budgeting. Those

employed by government had core decision-making authority over creating and implementing crisis response strategies.

PR Practitioners' Perspectives of Organizational Performance

Key respondents were asked to rate their organization's performance. Three measures of performance were analyzed including respondents' perceptions of the organization's success, innovativeness, and external reputation. These measures were rated on a seven-point Semantic Differential scale ranging from 1 to 7, where the 1-rating referred to the most desirable trait and the 7-rating referred to the least desirable trait. The semantics for each scale were: 1) Innovative to 7) Conservative; 1) Successful to 7) Unsuccessful, 1) Good external reputation to 7) Poor external reputation. The analysis revealed that PR/COMM practitioners' scale ratings generally leaned towards being successful ($M=2.42$) and having a good reputation ($M=2.47$), rather than being innovative ($M=3.55$). The innovation rating was more in the middle of the differential scale, indicating greater indecision on the part of the raters. These results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Semantic Differential Ratings for Organizational Reputation, Success, and Innovativeness

Organizational Trait	Rating Scale	Average	Standard Deviation	Number
Innovative	1) Innovative to 7) Conservative	3.55	1.7	62
Successful	1) Successful to 7) Unsuccessful	2.42	1.2	62
Good External Reputation	1) Good External Reputation to 7) Poor External Reputation	2.47	1.3	62

This table shows the number of observations for each measure of organizational performance. The column labeled ORGANIZATIONAL TRAIT lists the three aspects of organizational performance that were rated by the key respondents in the study. The column labeled RATING SCALE shows the Semantic Differential scale used to rate each of the traits. The column labeled AVERAGE shows the mean rating scale score for the trait measured. The column labeled STANDARD DEVIATION shows the standard deviation of the scale rating for the trait measured. The last column, labeled NUMBER, shows the number of key respondents who rated the trait.

The average ratings on for each of the organizational traits provided an interesting glimpse into the perceptions of PR/COMM practitioners. While they were inclined to see their organizations as being reasonably successful and well regarded, this differed to some extent from their perceptions of organizational innovativeness. For further analysis using logistic regression these three measures were recoded to capture only ratings that were primarily positive. The Innovative Semantic Differential scale ratings of only 1 or 2 (Innovative ratings) were captured for measures of Innovativeness, while scale ratings of 3 or more were treated as being non-innovative. This variable was then dummy coded as 0) Not Innovative and 1) Innovative. The same procedure was used to capture the highest desirable ratings for Success and Reputation. These results revealed that most firms did not meet the criterion for being rated as innovative (67.7%). Just over half of the firms were rated as being successful (54.8%) or having a good external reputation (58.1%). The dichotomous results for Innovativeness, Success, and Reputation measures are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Dichotomous Ratings for Organizational Reputation, Success, and Innovativeness

Organizational Trait	Applies	Does Not Apply	Number
Innovative	20 (32.3%)	42 (67.7%)	62
Successful	34 (54.8%)	28 (45.2%)	62
Good External Reputation	36 (58.1%)	26 (41.9%)	62

This table shows relative percent of the sample of key respondents who rated three organizational traits as applying, or not applying to their organizations. The first column, labeled Organizational Trait, lists the trait of the organization that was rated by key respondents. The column labeled APPLIES shows the number of respondents who believed that the trait applied to their organization with the percent of respondents in brackets. The column labeled DOES NOT APPLY shows the number and percent of key respondents who believed that the trait did not apply to their organization. The last column, labeled NUMBER, shows the number of key respondents who rated the trait.

The dichotomies created for each of the organizational traits provided a clear view of the extent to which PR/COMM practitioners viewed each in a favourable light. This was done by minimizing the impact of the middle of the Semantic Differential scale, essentially taking those in the mid-range “fence-sitting” position and shifting them towards the “does not apply” group. This shift in coding clarified the positive ratings for each criterion.

Organizational Integration of the PR/COMM Function

Respondents described their organization’s treatment of the PR/COMM function by rating it on eight criteria using a seven-point Likert Scale ranging from 1) Strongly disagree to 7) Strongly agree. Agreement with each criterion was determined by examining the average scale ratings and the percent of respondents rating each as 6 or 7 on the Likert Scale. The average scale rating demonstrated that 64% of PR professionals believed that the reporting lines in their organizations were appropriate (M=5.31, SD=2.1) and that 59% agreed that PR/COMM actively participated in long-term organization-wide strategic planning (M=5.3, SD=1.9). Sixty-one percent of practitioners also indicated that the recommendations made by PR/COMM were taken seriously by senior level management (M=5.47, SD=1.8).

There was less agreement among the perceptions of PR practitioners regarding how top-level executives felt about the contribution of the PR/COMM function to the betterment of the organization. Only 35.8% agreed that their CEO/COO believed that the PR/COMM function made a positive financial contribution to the organization (M=4.57, SD=1.9) and only 53.8% felt that top-ranking executives believed it contributed to the fair valuation of the firm/organization (M=5.18, SD=1.8). Most (61.3%) believed that there was integration across PR/COMM functions, such as media relations and corporation communications (M=5.39, SD=1.7), but there was less agreement regarding the integration of the PR/COMM function with other operational departments, such as finance, legal, operations or marketing. However, only 44% agreed that there was operational integration (M=5, SD=1.6) and 47.4% agreed that there was integration between PR/COMM and marketing functions (M=5.15, SD=1.7). This lack of integration could be a limiting factor for organizational success. These results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: PR Practitioners’ Perceptions of PR/COMM Integration and Regard in the Organization

Perception	Agreement (6 or 7 Rating)	Scale Average	Standard Deviation	Number
PR/COMM reporting lines are appropriate	64.0%	5.31	2.1	61
PR/COMM recommendations taken seriously by senior management	61.3%	5.47	1.8	62
PR/COMM actively participates in long-term strategic planning	59.0%	5.30	1.9	64
CEO/top executive believes that PR/COMM contributes to fair valuation of firm (stock)	53.8%	5.13	1.8	52
CEO/top executive believes that PR/COMM contributes to organization’s financial success	35.8%	4.57	1.9	52
Functions within PR/COMM department are well coordinated and integrated (media relations, corporate communications, etc)	61.3%	5.39	1.7	62
PR/COMM department is well coordinated with other departments (finance, operations, legal, etc.)	43.6%	5.00	1.6	62
PR/COMM and marketing functions are well coordinated and integrated	47.4%	5.15	1.7	62

This table shows the ratings for eight criteria used to measure practitioners’ perceptions of how PR/COMM are integrated and respected within their organizations. The column labeled PERCEPTION lists the criteria measured. The column labeled AGREEMENT shows the percent of key respondents who rated the scale 6 or 7 on a rating scale ranging from: 1) Strongly disagree to 7) Strongly agree. The column labeled SCALE AVERAGE shows the average rating on the scale for each perception measure. The column labeled STANDARD DEVIATION shows the standard deviation of the perception rating, while the last column, labeled NUMBER, shows the number of PR/COMM practitioners (key respondents) who rated each perception.

These results reveal that while PR practitioners are confident in their firm's willingness to involve PR/COMM in high level strategic planning, it appears that senior level management may not fully embrace, or understand, how PR/COMM can contribute to the overall betterment of the firm, particularly from a financial perspective. It also appears that more integration is possible between PR/COMM and operational departments. As indicated in the work of Rubtcova & Pavenkov (2019) and others (i.e. Blakeman, 2018; Valos., Turner, Scheepers, & Stockdale, 2018). the goal of integrated marketing communications is to build effective communication management, realizing efficiencies and synergies between these two communication-focused functions. The seamless integration of marketing, and other operational departments within the organization, allows for comprehensive strategic planning and optimizes shared communication platforms and messaging. The hypotheses presented in this paper focused on relating key respondents' perceptions about the PR/COMM function and its role in the organization to overall organizational performance. Researchers wanted to know if integrating the PR/COMM function into the firm, or if greater involvement of PR/COMM in strategic management, would lead to enhanced organizational performance on three levels: external reputation, innovativeness, and success.

Factor Analysis of PR/COMM Integration Measures

The eight PR/COMM perception variables were reduced in number by subjecting them to a factor analysis. The factor analysis allowed researchers to discover underlying common themes by which to link the perception measures. Individual variables were not multivariate normal, which can result in low inter-item correlation, confounding a factor analysis. A correlation analysis of the data set revealed strong inter-correlations, minimizing the impact of non-normality (Hair et al, 2008). Other measures of statistical significance, including the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) - Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) statistic, confirmed that the inter-item correlation was acceptable, and the sample was suitable for factor analysis. The factor analysis converged in two iterations and two unique factors were extracted capturing the eight measures of PR/COMM functional integration, and participation in the strategic management process. Collectively, the two factors explained 78.5% of the variance in the eight items factored. The strongest loading for each variable was selected when evaluating the factors. All of the variables loaded in the factor analysis. The factor analysis is shown in Table 5.

The first factor explained 44% of the variance and had an eigenvalue of 4.94. Five variables loaded heavily on this factor including: Our CEO/top executive believes that PR/COMM contributes to our organization's financial success; Our CEO/top executive believes that PR/COMM contributes to the fair valuation of our stock; PR/COMM recommendations are taken seriously by senior management (CEO, CFO, Chairperson) in my organization; PR/COMM actively participates in long-term organization-wide strategic planning; The reporting line for the PR/COMM function in my organization is appropriate. The factor loadings for each item ranged from .71 to .88, which were very strong factor loadings. This factor was labeled Senior Strategic PR/COMM Organization Focus. The second factor explained 34.4% of the variance and had an eigenvalue of 1.3. Three variables loaded heavily on this factor including: Our PR/COMM and Marketing functions are well coordinated and integrated; The functions within my PR/COMM department (media relations, corporate communications, etc.) are well coordinated and integrated with each other; My PR/COMM department is well coordinated and integrated with other departments (eg: Finance, Law, Operations, etc.); The factor loadings ranged from .84 to .90, which were very strong. This factor was labeled Coordinated & Integrated PR/COMM Processes.

Table 5: Results of Factor Analysis of PR/COMM Integration Measures

Perceptions	Factors and Factor Loadings	
	F1: Senior Strategic PR/COMM Organization Focus	F2: Coordinated & Integrated PR/COMM Processes
CEO/top executive believes that PR/COMM contributes to the organization’s financial success.	0.879	
CEO/top executive believes that PR/COMM contributes to the fair valuation of the organization (stock)	0.866	
PR/COMM recommendations are taken seriously by senior management (CEO, Chairperson, COO)	0.817	
PR/COMM actively participates in long-term organization-wide strategic planning	0.792	
The reporting line for the PR/COMM function is appropriate.	0.708	
PR/COMM and marketing functions are well coordinated and integrated		0.903
The functions within the PR/COMM dept. (media relations, corp. com, etc.) are well coordinated and integrated with each other		0.893
PR/COMM dept. is well coordinated and integrated with other departments (finance, legal, operations, etc.).		0.836
Eigenvalue		
Variance Explained	4.941	1.338
KMO=X ² =514.6, df=28, p=.000	44.1%	34.4%
Bartlett=.86		

This table shows the results of two factors that were extracted from the list of perceptions rated by key respondents. The column labeled PERCEPTIONS shows the eight perceptions that were rated by respondents. The second column labeled F1: SENIOR STRATEGIC PR/COMM ORGANIZATION FOCUS shows the factor loadings for perceptions that weighed more heavily on the F1 factor. The third column labeled F2: COORDINATED AND INTEGRATED PR/COMM PROCESSES shows the factor loadings for perceptions that weighed more heavily on the F2 factor. The last two rows of the table show the strength of each of the factors. The row labeled EIGENVALUE show the maximum amount of the variance explained by the factor as a latent root. The row labeled VARIANCE EXPLAINED shows the percent of total variance in the model explained by each of the factors extracted. Sample size = 122. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) - Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) statistic row shows the statistical significance of the Factor Analysis (p=.000) and row labelled Bartlett give the results of the Bartlett’s Test (.86).

The results of the Factor Analysis provided clean and uncorrelated variables for further analysis. The appeal of using factor scores to reduce variables lies in its ability to differentiate between unique structures underlying the data set while also grouping similar measures into the same factor. The two factors created in this analysis explained sufficient variance in the overall model to provide a suitable set of variables for further analysis.

Regression Analysis of PR/COMM Integration Measures on Organizational Performance

To test the hypotheses the factor scores created through the initial factor analysis were regressed against the three measures of organizational performance used in this study: PR/COMM practitioners’ perceptions of innovativeness, success, and external reputation. Three binary logistic regressions were conducted to determine how the two factors resulting from the Factor Analysis determined perceptions of PR/COMM practitioners’ perceptions of organizational innovativeness. The first factor (F1) captured the extent of PR/COMM organizational focus in the senior strategic management of the organization. The second factor (F2) captured the extent to which the organizations had integrated the PR/COMM function into the strategic management of the organization and the extent to which these activities were coordinated with other managerial functions.

The first logistic regression equation was used to identify determinants of perceptions of Organizational Innovativeness:

$$OI = \alpha + \beta(F1) + \beta(F2)$$

Where: OI = Organizational Innovativeness; a binary measure capturing whether PR/COMM practitioners believed the organization to be innovative or not innovative.

F1= Factor 1 from Factor Analysis: Senior Strategic PR/COMM Organizational Focus
F2= Factor 2 from Factor Analysis: Coordinated & Integrated PR/COMM Processes

The logistic regression was statistically significant ($\chi^2=7.880$, $df=2$, $p=.02$), but only for strategic focus and not for PR/COMM integration and coordination in the C-suite. The resulting regression equation was:

$$OI = -1.299 + 1.239(F1)$$

The regression for organizational innovativeness had a McFadden's R^2 of .14. Organizations that had a Senior Strategic PR/COMM Focus were 3.5 times more likely to be perceived as innovative than firms that did not have a strong PR/COMM strategic influence. The probability of being innovative was .78 for those with a strong PR/COMM strategic focus. Having a coordinated and integrated PR/COMM process was not significantly associated with organization innovativeness. The results are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Logistic Regression for Senior Strategic PR Focus and Coordinated and Integrated PR/COMM Processes on Perceived Organizational Innovativeness

Predictors	B	Std. Error.	df	Significance	Odds Ratio
F1: Senior Strategic PR/COMM Organization Focus	1.239	0.543	1	0.023*	3.451
F2: Coordinated & Integrated PR/COMM Processes	0.102	0.068	1	0.795	1.108
Constant	-1.299	0.422	1	0.002*	0.273

This table shows the results of the logistic regression to predict perceptions of organizational innovativeness based on practitioners' perceptions of senior focus of the PR/COM in the C-suite and the extent to which PR/COMM processes were coordinated and integrated with other key strategic management functions. The column labeled PREDICTORS lists the two independent predictor variables. The column labeled B includes the regression coefficient in the regression equation. The column labeled STANDARD ERROR shows the standard error of the regression coefficient. The column labeled DF shows the degrees of freedom of the logistic regression analysis. The column labeled SIGNIFICANCE shows the p-value associated with each of the predictors and the constant in the regression equation. Those with an asterisk () are statistically significant at the $\alpha = .05$ level, and those with two asterisks (**) are statistically significant at the $\alpha = .01$ level or better. The column labeled ODDS RATIO show the extent to which the factors increased the odds of organizational effectiveness being rated positively. Test statistics include: Sample size = 62, $\chi^2=7.880$, $df=2$, $p=.02$. McFadden's $R^2=.14$.*

While the regression was statistically significant, it was also quite weak. Only the constant and one of independent variables met the criteria for statistical significance of $\alpha=.05$. This independent variable, senior strategic PR/COM organizational focus, explained only 14% of the variation in perceptions of organization innovativeness. PR/COMM practitioners' perceptions of the innovativeness of their organizations was statistically independent of whether or not PR/COMM activities were coordinated and integrated with other functional areas in the strategic management of the organization. The second logistic equation was used to identify determinants of perceptions of Organizational Success:

$$OS = \alpha + \beta(F1) + \beta(F2)$$

Where: OS = Organizational Success; a binary measure capturing whether or not PR/COMM practitioners believed the organization to be successful or not successful.

F1= Factor 1 from Factor Analysis: Senior Strategic PR/COMM Organizational Focus
 F2= Factor 2 from Factor Analysis: Coordinated & Integrated PR/COMM Processes

Logistic regression results revealed that that there were no statistically significant associations between the two factors and organizational success ($\chi^2=1.144$, $df=2$, $p>.05$). The regression had a McFadden’s R^2 of .02. Neither factor was a statistically significant predictor of the perceptions of organizational success, nor was the constant statistically significant. This result reveals that organizational success was completely independent of both an organization’s strategic organization focus on PR/COMM and its level of coordination and integration into the functional areas of strategic decision making in the organization. The results are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Logistic Regression for Senior Strategic PR Focus and Coordinated and Integrated PR/COMM Processes on Perceived Organization Success

Predictors	B	Std. Error.	df	Significance	Odds Ratio
F1: Senior Strategic PR/COMM Organization Focus	0.268	0.296	1	0.366	0.137
F2: Coordinated & Integrated PR/COMM Processes	-0.049	0.314	1	0.634	0.861
Constant	-0.024	0.290	1	0.933	0.976

This table shows the results of the logistic regression to predict perceptions of organizational success based on practitioners’ perceptions of senior focus of the PR/COM in the C-suite and the extent to which PR/COMM processes were coordinated and integrated with other key strategic management functions. The column labeled PREDICTORS lists the two independent predictor variables. The column labeled B includes the regression coefficient in the regression equation. The column labeled STANDARD ERROR shows the standard error of the regression coefficient. The column labeled DF shows the degrees of freedom of the logistic regression analysis. The column labeled SIGNIFICANCE shows the p-value associated with each of the predictors and the constant in the regression equation. None of the tests were statistically significant. The column labeled ODDS RATIO show the extent to which the factors could increase the odds of organizational effectiveness being rated positively if the test results were statistically significant. Test statistics include: Sample size = 62, $\chi^2=1.144$, $df=2$, $p=.564$. McFadden’s $R^2=.02$.

Table 7 revealed that neither one of the factors measured had a statistically significant influence on PR/COMM practitioners’ perceptions of organizational success. The levels of statistical significance exceed the minimum cut-off of $\alpha=.05$. The McFadden’s pseudo R^2 showed that the strength of the regression was poor with perception factors explaining only two percent of the variation in organizational success. The third logistic regression equation was used to identify determinants of perceptions of External Reputation:

$$ER = \alpha + \beta(F1) + \beta(F2)$$

Where: ER = External Reputation: a binary measure capturing whether or not PR/COMM practitioners believed the organization’s external reputation was considered to be good, or not good.

F1= Factor 1 from Factor Analysis: Senior Strategic PR/COMM Organizational Focus
 F2= Factor 2 from Factor Analysis: Coordinated & Integrated PR/COMM Processes

Logistic regression results revealed that that there were no statistically significant associations between the two factors and good external reputation ($\chi^2=.696$, $df=2$, $p>.05$.) The regression had a McFadden’s R^2 of .01. The external reputation of the firm was not associated with either the coordination and integration of the PR/COMM function within the strategic foci of the organization, nor was it influenced by the senior strategic management having a PR/COMM focus. These results indicate that organizational reputation is independent of the level to which PR/COMM is embraced in the C-suite. The results appear in Table 8.

Table 8: Logistic Regression for Senior Strategic PR Focus and Coordinated and Integrated PR/COMM Processes on Perceptions of External Reputation of the Organization

Predictors	B	Std. Error.	df	Significance	Odds Ratio
F1: Senior Strategic PR/COMM Organization Focus	0.268	0.296	1	0.366	0.137
F2: Coordinated & Integrated PR/COMM Processes	-0.049	0.314	1	0.634	0.861
Constant	-0.024	0.290	1	0.933	0.976

This table shows the results of the logistic regression to predict perceptions of organizational success based on practitioners' perceptions of senior focus of the PR/COM in the C-suite and the extent to which PR/COMM processes were coordinated and integrated with other key strategic management functions. The column labeled PREDICTORS lists the two independent predictor variables. The column labeled B includes the regression coefficient in the regression equation. The column labeled STANDARD ERROR shows the standard error of the regression coefficient. The column labeled DF shows the degrees of freedom of the logistic regression analysis. The column labeled SIGNIFICANCE shows the p-value associated with each of the predictors and the constant in the regression equation. None of the tests were statistically significant. The column labeled ODDS RATIO show the extent to which the factors could increase the odds of organizational effectiveness being rated positively if the test results were statistically significant. Test statistics include: Sample size = 62. $\chi^2=1.144$, $df=2$, $p=.564$. McFadden's $R^2=.02$.

The logistic regression predicting perception of a good external reputation for an organization was weak. The McFadden's R^2 showed that the independent variables (senior strategic PR/COMM focus and coordination/integration of PR/COMM function) explained only one percent of the variation in external reputation for the organization. This is an interesting finding given that a key mandate for PR/COMM outside of the marketing function is to help to create and maintain a desirable image for the organization (Matios & Cardoso, 2019).

Determining the Contribution of PR/COMM to the Performance of Canadian Organizations

In this study, innovation was framed for respondents in a question establishing the degree to which an organization demonstrated a participatory versus authoritarian culture. Organizational innovativeness is most evident in the former (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2009). In a more general sense, “innovation ’is a word that generally conveys positive ideas about newness, uniqueness, value, benefits, improvement, change, development, etc,” (Courtright & Smudde, 2009, p. 246). However, public relations practitioners are perhaps most familiar with this idea of organizational innovativeness as it relates to the pursuit of excellence. That public relations can facilitate the acceptance of new ideas and opportunities in organizational decision-making, or reflect an openness to diverse and varied ideas, is also a key principle in Excellence theory (Grunig, 1992). The principle of requisite variety (Weick, 1979), one of Grunig et al's (1992) pillars of excellent public relations, essentially states that an organization's ability to remain open to new ideas, new stakeholder groups, and new challenges will determine the organization's success within a complex external environment. It is perhaps not surprising to find that openness to the new, or innovativeness within the organization, factor significantly with public relations access to decision-making. This relationship between innovativeness and public relations engagement in decision-making supports earlier work by Zerfass and Huck (2007) which argued that communication should play a new and expanded role in the development of innovation management within organizations.

They define innovation as “something new, something that has not been there and that has a strong influence on everyday life or on the economy” (p.108). Based on the theoretical model and previous work, researchers had expected a stronger relationship between the other two factors, organizational success and external reputation, and public relations access to decision-making. However, these results could be due to differences in samples and methods. This research focused on PR/COMM practitioners' perceptions of the function's contribution to organizational performance: not the views of executives, stakeholders, or others. It is possible that PR/COMM practitioners simply do not believe that senior strategic involvement or integration of the PR/COMM function are relevant to creating and maintaining either an organization's reputation or contributing to its overall success. Possibly, these outcomes are believed to be linked to the

successful application of the PR/COMM function independent of strategic management or other functional areas of the organization. Possibly, this is an application of the goal attainment perspective, which focuses on the belief that PR/COMM adds value to an organization in its own right, not due to its integration with other functions in the organization, or strategic-level managerial input.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Building on the literature and what is considered to be best practice in public relations, the goal of this paper was to explore the extent to which the integration and coordination of PR/COMM into the functional management areas of the organization, as well as its integration into senior strategic decision-making impacted key organizational traits. Organizational traits investigated in this research included organizational success, innovativeness, and external reputation as perceived by the top-level PR/COMM professional/practitioner in the organization. The data for this study were collected as part of a larger global initiative that included taking stock of the state of public relations/communications in Canadian organizations. The integration and coordination of public relations/communications within Canadian organizations was also considered, focusing on its involvement in strategic decisions at the highest levels and integrating PR/COMM into C-suite management functions commonly involved in upper level planning.

This research revealed that coordination and integration of the PR/COMM processes in the firm had no statistically significant association with any of those organizational traits. Nor did a PR/COMM focus on senior strategic decision-making significantly impact perceptions of an organization's success or its external reputation. The lack of significance relative to creating a positive external reputation was most interesting given that much of the focus in practice and research has been on the ability of PR/COMM to create and manage a positive reputation, which should then contribute to the firm's overall success. It is possible that future research could examine this finding in greater depth using qualitative research methods.

However, integrating PR/COMM functions in upper-level strategic decision-making did have a positive influence on an organization's perceived innovativeness. As a predictor of perceived organizational success, firms with a PR/COMM focus on upper-level strategic decision-making were 3.5 times more likely to be perceived as innovative. While innovativeness is not always seen as a characteristic that is linked to the practice of PR/COMM, it is possible that forward-facing organizations that take advantage of their public relations capacity have the ability to integrate innovativeness into strategic decision making in more fundamental ways than organizations that do not embrace public relations as fully in their upper level decision-making. There were limitations in this research. First, there was a small sample size of only 62 organizations from across Canada. While small sample sizes are not unusual in public relations research there was some diversity in this sample that may have confounded the results. These organizations reflected primarily private enterprises and government organizations. A larger sample size made up of primarily privately held businesses may yield different results. Also, the focus on PR/COMM practitioners' views, rather than those of coworkers and non-PR executives, could not provide a holistic view of how the PR/COMM functions is perceived by the management forum in Canadian organizations. Future research should address these limitations while also reflecting the views of Canadian firms from across the nation, capturing and comparing possible regional differences in strategic management practices.

REFERENCES

Berger, B. K. (2005). Power over, power with, and power to relations: Critical reflections on public relations, the dominant coalition, and activism. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17(1), 5-28.

Blakeman, R. (2018). *Integrated marketing communication: creative strategy from idea to implementation*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Bowen, S. A. (2015). Exploring the Role of the Dominant Coalition in Creating an Ethical Culture for Internal Stakeholders. *Public Relations Journal*, 9(1), 2.

Bowen, S. A. (2009). What communication professionals tell us regarding dominant coalition access and gaining membership. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 37(4), 418-443.

Courtright, J. L., & Smudde, P. M. (2009). Leveraging organizational innovation for strategic reputation management. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 12(3), 245–269. <https://doi.org/10.1057/crr.2009.18>

Diga, M., & Kelleher, T. (2009). Social media use, perceptions of decision-making power, and public relations roles. *Public Relations Review*, 35(4), 440-442.

Doorley, J., & Garcia, H. F. (2015). *Reputation management: The key to successful public relations and corporate communication*. Routledge.

Edwards, L. (2009). Symbolic power and public relations practice: Locating individual practitioners in their social context. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 21(3), 251-272.

Edwards, L. (2006). Rethinking power in public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 32(3), 229-231.

Eisenberg, Eric. 2007. *Strategic ambiguities: Essays on communication, organization, and identity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Friedmann, J. P., & Maurer, S. (2003). *Innovation: A wealth of contradictions*. *Executive Agenda*, 6(3), 55-63.

Grunig, L. A. (1992). Power in the Public Relations. *Excellence in public relations and communication management*. Routledge Communication Series Publisher, 483.

Grunig, J.E. (2006). Furnishing the edifice: Ongoing research on public relations as a strategic management function. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18(2), 151-176.

Hair, J. F. Jr., Black, W.C., Babin, B. J., Anderson, R.E., & Tatham, R. L. (2006) *Multivariate Data Analysis*, 6th ed., Prentice-Hall, NJ.

Holtzhausen, D. R., & Voto, R. (2002). Resistance from the margins: The postmodern public relations practitioner as organizational activist. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 14(1), 57-84.

Huck, S. (2006). New perspectives on innovation communication. *Innovation journalism*, 3(4), 1-20

Ihlen, Ø., & Fredriksson, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Public Relations and Social Theory: Key Figures, Concepts and Developments*. Routledge.

Jarzabkowski, P., Sillince, J. A., & Shaw, D. (2010). Strategic ambiguity as a rhetorical resource for enabling multiple interests. *Human Relations*, 63(2), 219-248.

Kauhanen, E. (2005, April 4–6). Innovation is much more than business and technology. Paper presented to the *Second Conference on Innovation Journalism*, Stanford University.

Mast, C., Huck, S., & Zerfass, A. (2005). Innovation communication. *Innovation Journalism*, 2(4), 165

- Mast, C., Huck, S. and Zerfass, A. (2006), *Innovation Communication in Dynamic Markets, Empirical Results and Case Studies*, LIT, Münster.
- Matias, A. & Cardoso, L. (2019). Public Relations in Organizational Communication. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 4(10). p.p. 9-14.
- Meseguer, M. M. (2004). Comunicar la innovación. De la empresa a los medios. Madrid: FundaciónCOTEC para la Innovación Tecnológica.
- Nordfors, D. (2004). The role of journalism in innovation systems. *Innovation Journalism*, 1(7), 1–18.
- Moss, D., Warnaby, G., & Newman, A.J. (2000). Public relations practitioner role enactment at the senior management level within UK companies. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 2(4), 277-207.
- Nambisan, S., Lyytinen, K., Majchrzak, A., & Song, M. (2017). Digital Innovation Management: Reinventing innovation management research in a digital world. *MIS Quarterly*, 41(1), 233-238.
- Nordfors, D. (2004). The role of journalism in innovation systems. *Innovation Journalism*, 1(7), 1–18.
- Nothhaft, H. (2010). Communication management as a second-order management function: Roles and functions of the communication executive – results from a shadowing study. *Journal of Communication Management*, 14(2), 127-140.
- Plowman, K. D. (1998). Power in conflict for public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10(4), 237-261.
- Rubtcova, M., & Pavenkov, O. (2019, February). Features of Integrated Marketing Communications of the Russian Bank Sphere. In *RF-360th International Conference on Management, Economics & Social Science-ICMESS*.
- Sallot, L. M., Porter, L. V., & Acosta-Alzuru, C. (2004). Practitioners' web use and perceptions of their own roles and power: A qualitative study. *Public Relations Review*, 30(3), 269-278.
- Scandellius, C., & Cohen, G. (2016). Achieving collaboration with diverse stakeholders—The role of strategic ambiguity in CSR communication. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(9), 3487-3499.
- Smith, B. G., & Place, K. R. (2013). Integrating power? Evaluating public relations influence in an integrated communication structure. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 25(2), 168-187.
- Sriramesh, K., & Vercic, D. (2009). The relationship between culture and public relations. In *The Global Public Relations Handbook, Revised and Expanded Edition* (pp. 91-106). Routledge.
- Swerling, J., Thorson, K., & Zerfass, A. (2014). The role and status of communication practice in the USA and Europe. *Journal of Communication Management*, 18(1), 2-15.
- Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (2010). Anticipatory socialization in the use of social media in public relations: A content analysis of PRSA's Public Relations Tactics. *Public Relations Review*, 36(3), 207-214.
- Thurlow, A., Kushniryk, A., Blotnicky, K., & Yue, A. R. (2014). *GAP VIII Canada: Eighth Communication and Public Relations Generally Accepted Practices Study (Canadian Results) Final Report*. Halifax, NS, Canada: Mount Saint Vincent University Department of Communication Studies.

Valos, M. J., Turner, P., Scheepers, H., & Stockdale, R. (2018). Integrating online communities within business-to-business marketing communications: an exploratory study. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 24(5), 450-468.

Weick, K. E. (1979). Cognitive processes in organizations. *Research in organizational behavior*, 1(1), 41-74.

Wright, D. K., & Hinson, M. D. (2013). An updated examination of social and emerging media use in public relations practice: A longitudinal analysis between 2006 and 2013. *Public Relations Journal*, 7(3), 1-39.

Yungwook, K. (2001). Measuring the economic value of public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 13(1), 3-26.

Zerfass, A., Sandhu, S., & Huck, S. (2004). Innovationskommunikation – Strategisches Handlungsfeld für Corporate Communications. In Bentele, G., Piwinger, M., & Schönborn, G. (Eds.), *Kommunikationsmanagement (Supplement No. 1.24)*, 1–30. Neuwied, Germany: Luchterhand.

Zerfass, A., & Huck, S. (2007). Innovation, communication, and leadership: New developments in strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1(2), 107-122.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank Drs. Alla Kushniryk and Anthony R. Yue of Mount Saint Vincent University for their comments on earlier versions of this work. The authors also acknowledge the support of the Canadian Public Relations Society which provided funding for the original study upon which this analysis is based.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Karen Blotnick is Professor in the Department of Business Administration and Tourism and Hospitality Management at Mount Saint Vincent University. Her research appears in journals such as *Journal of Human Resources in Hospitality and Tourism*, *College Student Journal*, *International Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, *International Journal of Business, Marketing and Decision Science*, and the *International Journal of STEM Education*. She can be contacted at Mount Saint Vincent University.

Dr. Amy Thurlow is a Professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University. Her research appears in journals such as *Public Relations Review*, *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management*, *Journal of Change Management*, *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, and the *Canadian Journal of Communication*. She can be contacted at Mount Saint Vincent University.