



SGKM
Schweizerische Gesellschaft
für Kommunikations-
und Medienwissenschaft

SSCM
Société suisse des sciences
de la communication
et des médias

SSCM
Società svizzera di scienze
della comunicazione
e dei media

SACM
Swiss Association
of Communication and
Media Research



Call for Papers

SCOMS special issue on:

International and Comparative Research in Organizational Communication and Public Relations

Special Issue Editor: Prof. Dr. Diana Ingenhoff

Objectives

The SCOMS special issue 2012/2 will address current prospects and developments in the field of international and comparative public relations and organizational communication research, discussing the inherent potentials and limitations. There is not much systematic or theory-based research for the description and explanation of international public relations and organizational communication yet. Thus, comparative research requires a thorough discussion of equivalence issues and the systematic selection of comparative cultures. With regard to international public relations and organizational communication as well as to comparative research, closing gaps and working towards a basic theory for these areas should be the objective.

Valuation and Relevance of the Topic

Public relations and organizational communication are practiced around the world in different forms, however until now, research focused primarily on the German-speaking, Western and Anglo-American perspective. Yet due to globalization, multinational organizations face increasingly diverse and inter-linked stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds with different expectations, engaging in an increasingly complex interplay of media types (e.g. social media vs. mass media).

Thus, multinational organizations are faced with the challenge of adjusting their communication strategies to different cultures. PR and organizational communication research is primarily culture-dependent (cf. Sriramesh, Dozier, Grunig 1996). However, comparative international PR research often lags behind the latest scientific findings. Profound definition work still needs to be approached, for example how to define terms such as intercultural, international, global or trans-cultural communication/PR? Or how to structure the diffuse, empirical knowledge of content and method?

Following Culbertson & Chen (1996), the target of international comparative public relations research is to identify more or less universal issues and challenges which are present in various cultural organizational contexts. A further aim is to create generic variables that are widely applicable and can claim universal validity. Thus, the attention of international comparative PR research has to be on the development of comparable concepts and designs, which will enable key constructs and problems of PR to be applied within organizations from different national backgrounds. But is such a thing possible? The focus is therefore on international organizations and their structures and processes, where the question of the diversity of culture and its consequences is central to international PR practices.

Cultural aspects, general media frameworks, societal differences and infrastructure are context-dependent variables, which are of key importance in penetrating the theoretical and practical foundation of PR and organizational communication. These factors are crucial for the development of strategies through which organizations aim to increase their "effectiveness" in the global context (cf. Verčič et al. 1996). Organizational communication and PR interlink the organization to its environment(s) and its respective conditions, which further relate to political, legal, economic, technological, socio-cultural, addressee-related and media-related factors. However, the environmental variables, which are considered important in international relations and organizational communication, have been poorly researched thus far. Although there have been attempts to frame cultural variables and mediatization, other areas, such as the impact of (social) infrastructure variables have not yet been studied extensively. In addition, the structure of internal preconditions for international PR and organizational communication are still not adequately researched. Similarly, the target constructs of image and reputation require further clarification with respect to these areas of research.

Potential Research Questions

Looking at the wide range of desiderata indicated in the valuation of the topic, promising research questions arise with regard to: the definition and systematization of international public relations, organizational communication and comparative research, the interlinking of the topic with theories already applied in public relations research, the analysis of environmental and cultural factors, the consequences of internationalization for concepts and practices of organizational communication and finally the very methods applied in researching the topic.

- Touching on the problem of **definition and systematization**, researchers could address questions like: Which objectives, characteristics and problems mark international public relations, organizational communication and comparative research? Which approaches, research guidelines and findings have been produced so far and how can they be classified?
- Further research questions with respect to possible links to **existing theories of public relations** could be: What is the relevance of traditional PR models for transnational and international PR (e.g. “Excellence Theory” of Grunig/Hunt) and what theories of medium-to-wide range (e.g. cultural studies, management approaches, communication and social science approaches) are particularly applicable to international PR and comparative research in PR on micro-, meso- and macro- levels?
- Focusing on the **environmental and cultural factors**, for instance, one may ask: What cultural, media-related and infrastructure-related differences exist for international PR practices and how do they affect public perception in various countries? What generic principles and specific contextual factors are required for the further research of globally relevant PR theory and practice?
- Approaching the topic from the **perspective of the organization** poses questions regarding the impact of internationalization and globalization on organizational communication practices: How do multinational corporations act communicatively – internally as well as externally – between the conflicting areas of organizational and national identity? And further: Should the aim be a strong integration of internal and external communication practices or do the challenges of internationality rather demand an endorsement of polyphony (plurality of voices)?
- Finally, to further elaborate discussion on **methods**, researchers may consider: How is international PR and comparative research in PR developed methodologically? Which methods have proven to be especially appropriate in which countries? What problems do exist regarding comparative research in PR (e.g. language, culturally dependent conditions for surveys and responses, access to the research field, etc.) and how can such issues be solved?

Submissions

Deadline for submission is March 15th, 2012.

Please send submissions to:

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