

ACHIEVING A MATCH:
GAUGING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CORPORATE PRESS RELEASES

By
MCKENZIE ERICA GRENFELL

A Thesis Submitted to The Honors College
In Partial Fulfillment of the Bachelors degree
With Honors in
Communication

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

MAY 2016

Approved by:

Dr. Jennifer Stevens-Aubrey

Department of Communication

Abstract

From a public relations perspective, the effectiveness of a press release is measured by the extent to which the media coverage matches the original intent of the piece (Wilcox et al., 2015). The present study examined press releases over the past five years from the top 25 corporations in the United States in order to ascertain the extent to which news media match these public relations efforts. Press releases and articles were coded for the presence of various discourses (technology, science, quality, sales, change, ethics, innovation, excellence, and crisis) business and social marketing practices, supplementation, and referential similarity. The results revealed that the discourses were the most frequently matched component between press releases and articles and that while articles never provided a direct link to the original press releases, they did reference the release the majority of the time. Business marketing, social marketing, and supplementation were rarely present in the press releases and even less so in the articles, which suggests a filtering of corporate bias by news media. Discussion focuses on practical implications for the field of corporate public relations.

Achieving a Match: Gauging the Effectiveness of Corporate Press Releases

Some might say that a fundamental issue facing corporations in America today is the negative stigma against big business. The large size of multi-billion dollar for-profit organizations is so unimaginable to the average consumer that corporations begin to seem faceless and untrustworthy (Wilcox et al., 2015). The immense power and influence of these businesses coupled with the major corporate financial scandals and the misdeeds of corporate executives in recent years have only increased the general mistrust of these organizations (Wilcox et al., 2015). This has led to almost one-third of the American population lacking confidence in big business (Wilcox et al., 2015). In order to combat these negative public perceptions, it is "...imperative that companies make a special effort to regain public credibility and trust" (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 449). The process through which companies achieve this is described as public relations. Public relations has been defined as "...a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 7). Publics can be defined as the communities of people that are involved in or affected by an organization, or have the potential to be in the future. These publics can include customers, employees, shareholders, policymakers, and other groups that interact with an organization. For for-profit organizations, income is the benchmark of success and building and maintaining these relationships is the key to maximizing profits for shareholders and owners.

Public relations activities include a combination of media relations, publicity, community relations, public affairs, marketing communications, industry relations, and issue management, among others (Wilcox et al., 2015). Perry and Bodkin (2000) found through a content analysis of Fortune 100 companies that public relations activities were the second most frequent component present on corporate websites. This finding is consistent with the longitudinal study done by

Sriramesh, Rivera-Sanchez, and Soriano (2013) that analyzed the use of websites for corporations and found that they primarily used their websites for the one-way dissemination of information to their stakeholders. One of the main ways that corporations engage in this dissemination of information is through the publishing of press releases. Press releases are "...the most commonly used public relations tactic" (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 364) and are an organization's primary means of disseminating information for the purposes of both transparency and the alteration of public perceptions. By being more forthcoming with company news, announcements, financial reports, and strategic changes, corporations "pursue transparency and disclosure, and make trust a fundamental precept of corporate governance" (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 450).

Similarly, other studies have analyzed the press releases of corporations (Kim, Hong, & Cameron, 2014), and they have examined the media effects of corporate websites and press releases (Webb, Cohen, Nath, & Wood, 2008). However, little research has been done in measuring the effectiveness of various public relations strategies that corporations use to generate revenue and public favorability in the first place. One of the key questions that public relations professionals use while assessing the effectiveness of their processes is: "did the media mention the key messages?" (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 14). When considering this concept in terms of press releases, this means that corporations issue these statements in hopes that media outlets will reiterate their perspectives in the respective publicity. The effectiveness of a press release from a public relations perspective is measured by the extent to which the media coverage matches the original intent of the piece (Wilcox et al., 2015). Thus, the primary purpose of the present study is to investigate the match between the press releases and their generated publicity. The present study specifically compares the press releases of the top twenty for-profit companies

in the United States to news articles generated about them in order to measure the match, the existence of social marketing and business marketing principles, and the extent to which the perspectives expressed in the press releases are supplemented by other agents.

Literature Review

Discourses and Matching Press Releases to the Generated Publicity

Public relations requires the effective framing of an event or situation in order to produce the desired effect in public perceptions. An important way that companies do this is by utilizing a specific discourse in its communication. A discourse is "...a system of thought with its own linguistic tool bag , or collection of terms and metaphors for key concepts and ideas, and its own categories for understanding, themes for stories, and familiar arguments to draw upon to describe, explain, or justify our place in the world at any given moment" (Fairhurst, 2010, p. 33). Part of evaluating the match between the press release and the publicity is categorizing the discourses that are present in both components and considering if they are the same. There are several ways to measure the consistency between the original intended discourse of the press release with the discourse put forth by the media coverage. Because each discourse utilizes a specific linguistic tool bag, the existence of the same or synonymous words across the press releases and their subsequent publicity is key to measuring the extent of the match. Some of the discourses that may be utilized by corporations in their press releases include technology, environmental, quality, sales, change, ethics, and crisis (Fairhurst, 2010, p. 39).

Other components that evaluate the match are how much of the press release is quoted in the news articles and if the news media provides a link to the original press release. This includes the extent to which the news coverage references the original press release, whether through direct quoting, paraphrasing, and providing a link to the news release itself. The question of

match is addressed through the combination of these and the identification of discourses. This leads to the first research question:

RQ 1a: To what extent do the discourses used in the publicity match the discourses used in the press release?

RQ 1b: To what extent does the publicity reference the press release?

Social Marketing versus Business Marketing

Another part of measuring the match between the original intent of the press releases and the generated publicity is identifying specific elements of organizational communication and persuasion. The first of these is marketing. Because corporations have multiple publics that have an impact on the amount of revenue they generate, as previously discussed, marketing to all of these audiences, customers, and shareholders is crucial to maximizing income and purporting a positive image. Business, or commercial marketing, is the most traditional type that is used by corporations. The objective of business marketing is to sell a product or service for the purpose of generating revenue. However, in their quest "...to keep consumers educated about...what they contribute to society" (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 446), many corporations have turned to a second form of marketing to improve their public image. The "concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is now high on the priority list of executives and their public relations staffs, who are charged with improving the reputation and citizenship of their employers" (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 449). Corporate social responsibility is the concern of a corporation for globally, ethically, environmentally sustainable, safe, and quality-based processes (Wilcox et al., 2015). CSR is utilized as a part of public relations because it allows corporations to show that they are doing their part to make positive impacts on the world. As a part of CSR, for-profit organizations sometimes dedicate themselves to information campaigns that are designed to "...promote social

ideas or improve public health” (Perloff, 2010, p. 325). By getting their publics to accept these messages and adopt these ideas, corporations can generate revenues and garner support from those who perceive the organization to be furthering these ideas. Information campaigns employ this second type of marketing principles, called social marketing, which has been defined as “a process of designing, implementing, and controlling programs to increase the acceptability of a pro-social idea among population segments of consumers” (Perloff, 2010, p. 333). This differs from business or commercial marketing in its objective, which is to inform instead of sell, but the initial intent to persuade is inherently the same in both forms of marketing. As an example, a press release discussing the initiatives that an organization is putting in place to support gender equality is an example of social marketing, while a press release promoting the newest product of a company would employ business marketing. The difference is in the goal of the communication activity and whether it seeks to sell a product versus promote a social idea or agenda.

Consequently, business marketing and social marketing see a vast overlap in tactics and strategies. The emerging concept of corporate social responsibility sees for-profit companies engaging in social marketing in order to generate a more positive public image. The corporation hopes that this, in turn, will make the company appear more favorable to customers and shareholders and therefore result in increased revenue. This represents the ultimately shared interests of “...a corporate enterprise and a corporate citizen of philanthropy” as discussed by Peter Drucker, the famous management consultant, in his five tenets of marketing (Uslay, Morgan, & Sheth, 2008, p. 53). In order to measure the intermingling of business marketing and social marketing practices at play in the public relations efforts of these corporations, the second research question states the following:

RQ 2a: For each corporation, how often are the press releases using business marketing, social marketing, or both?

RQ 2b: Are there differences in the match between press releases and publicity based on whether the press release uses business or social marketing?

Supplementation

Aside from the marketing strategies, there are other elements of mass persuasion that must be considered when looking at the match between the press releases of these organizations and the public perceptions as demonstrated by the generated publicity. A key to the success of information campaigns is supplementation, or the complementing of media messages by other organizations and events. The news media is more likely to reiterate the original intent of a press release if its material is supported by other bodies of knowledge, which speaks to the recommendation to “supplement media materials as much as possible with community contacts” in order to achieve a greater match between organizational objectives and publicity (Perloff, 2010, p. 337). It is important to understand the effect that supplementation, or the lack of, can have on the match between the press releases and the publicity generated by them because the other information out there, whether similar or alternative, can affect the discourses being used and the tone of the publicity. Specifically, the present study would like to examine if press releases which use supplementation experience a greater level of match to the news article. The importance of considering the message effects that other bodies have on the publicity generated about an event or situation is articulated in the third research question:

RQ 3a: How often do press releases employ supplementation?

RQ 3b: Do press releases that employ supplementation demonstrate a higher level of match with their respective publicity compared to those that do not?

Method

The method I selected for this study was a content analysis. I deemed this to be the most appropriate because content analyses objectively and systematically identify multiple elements within a written piece of communication. Because this study seeks to evaluate the match between two forms of communication (press releases and news articles), it was important to choose a method of analysis that supported textual examination and comparison. All three of my research questions are broken up into variables that can be marked as either present or not within a body of text as well as counted for the purposes of measuring frequency. With this in mind, a content analysis was the appropriate way to examine and connect these variables by differences in communication content and identifying original patterns within the text.

Sample

To construct the sample, I consulted *Forbes'* Fortune 500 list of for-profit organizations in the United States (2015) to identify the top 20 corporations. This list ranks all companies that operate and are incorporated in the United States based on their revenues. From this list, the corporations sampled were Walmart, Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Apple, General Motors, Phillips 66, General Electric, Ford, CVS Health, McKesson, AT&T, Valero Energy, Fannie Mae, Costco, HP, Kroger, JP Morgan Chase, Express Scripts Holdings, Bank of America, and IBM. Berkshire Hathaway, despite being ranked at number four, was not sampled because the press releases published on its company website only covered mergers and acquisitions and did not cover a broad enough spectrum of news to generate sufficient publicity. This means that the 21st corporation on *Forbes'* list, JP Morgan Chase, was included in the sample. Additionally, UnitedHealth Group, Verizon, and Amerisource Bergen, despite being ranked 13th, 14th, and 15th respectively, did not end up having any matches during the sampling process and were therefore

replaced by the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th ranked companies (Express Scripts Holdings, Bank of America, and IBM). These replacements made it possible to achieve the targeted sample size of 20 organizations.

For each of these organizations, all press releases published on their websites over the past five years were eligible to be downloaded, sampled, and compared against news media articles published by four elite American news media outlets: *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Los Angeles Times*. These publications were selected specifically because they have been identified as elite American news sources by previous studies (Carpenter, 2007; Monmonier, 1986; Schmutz et al., 2010). A search on Lexis Nexis using the organization's name alongside the name of the publication was done for each organization and publication. The results were then filtered newest to oldest and then by the specific publication. At this point, results were compared to the list of press releases from the organization's website in order to find the most recent match. A match was defined as a news article that addressed the topic of the press release in its title and/or subject material. Although all four elite newspapers were searched for each company, there was not always a match for each publication. This resulted in a sample size of 47 press release/news article matches. Each press release was only matched with one respective article; once a topic was taken by a publication, the next news source had to match with a different topic.

Measurement

Discourses. The coding of eight discourses that were potentially present in the articles was based on categories from Fairhurst (2010). Each discourse was coded as “yes” (present) or “no” (not present) for each article and press release. In cases in which articles and press releases used more than one discourse, all present discourses were coded as “yes.” For each discourse

(such as sales marketing), a focus area was listed to describe the subject nature of the discourse (such as “information related to distribution of a product or service”) and examples of vocabulary words that might be used to create the discourse (such as “campaign, quota, delivery, production, profit, manufacturer, supply, demand, consumer”) were also given. The coder was told to code a discourse if three or more of the vocabulary words or their synonyms were present in the press release or article.

Reference to the press release. We coded four indicators of reference to the press release within the articles. First, we coded (“yes” or “no”) if the article provided a link to the original press release. Second and third, for either direct quotes from the press release or rephrasing the press release without quoting, the raw score was coded. The coder was instructed to count rephrasing only once per sentence.

Marketing strategies. Articles were coded (“yes” or “no”) if evidence of social marketing and/or business marketing were present in the press release and in the article. The press release and the article were coded separately.

Supplementation. In order for a press release to be considered supplemented, it had to mention or reference material that was from another source. The amount of times alternate material was present was counted and coded as a raw score. If no supplementation was present, this was coded as a “0.”

Coding

In total, 48% ($n = 22$) of the sample of press release and article matches were coded by an undergraduate male communication major (not the main author). The remaining sample was coded by the first author. Roughly 20% ($n = 11$) of the sample of press releases and their articles

were used to establish intercoder reliability. Krippendorff's alpha was used to estimate intercoder reliability. Table 1 shows the results for each of the variables coded for the press releases.

Table 1: Intercoder Reliability Results-Press Releases

Variable	Krippendorff's Alpha	Agreements	Disagreements	Cases	Decisions
Social marketing	$\alpha=0.738$	8	1	9	18
Business marketing	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Supplementation	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Sales discourse	$\alpha=0.790$	8	1	9	18
Change discourse	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Ethics discourse	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Science discourse	undefined	9	0	9	18
Quality discourse	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Technology discourse	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Crisis discourse	undefined	9	0	9	18
Innovation discourse	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Excellence discourse	$\alpha=0.779$	8	1	9	18

The Science discourse and the Crisis discourse were never coded as present in the intercoder reliability sample, which resulted in an undefined result. Table 2 shows each variable's results for the articles.

Table 2: Intercoder Reliability Results-Articles

Variable	Krippendorff's Alpha	Agreements	Disagreements	Cases	Decisions
Sales discourse	$\alpha=0.790$	8	1	9	18
Change discourse	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Ethics discourse	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Science discourse	undefined	9	0	9	18
Quality discourse	$\alpha=0.779$	8	1	9	18
Technology discourse	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Crisis discourse	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
Innovation discourse	$\alpha=0.622$	8	1	9	18
Excellence discourse	$\alpha=1.000$	8	1	9	18
Link	undefined	9	0	9	18
Quotes	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18
References	$\alpha=0.622$	8	1	9	18
Social marketing	undefined	9	0	9	18
Business marketing	$\alpha=1.000$	9	0	9	18

The Science discourse, link, and social marketing were never coded as present in the intercoder reliability sample, which resulted in an undefined result.

Results

For RQ 1a, I asked to what extent the discourses used in the publicity matched the discourses used in the press release. Table 3 depicts the results in terms of the percentage of the time each match or mismatch occurred followed by the raw amount in parentheses. As can be seen in Table 3, for each discourse (except for the Excellence category), a match occurred the majority of the time (matches ranging from 61.7% to 97.9% of the time). For Excellence, which had the press release using the discourse and the subsequent publicity not using it just as

frequently as it experienced an overall match. It is also worth noting that no press releases were coded as using a Crisis discourse as well as that the Science discourse was never coded as present in any articles or press releases.

Table 3: Discourses

Discourse	PR(Y)/ News(Y)	PR(N)/ News(N)	PR(Y)/ News(N)	PR(N)/ News(Y)	Total
Sales	51.1% (24)	38.3% (18)	4.3% (2)	6.4% (3)	100% (47)
Change	31.9% (15)	51.1% (24)	10.6% (5)	6.4% (3)	100% (47)
Ethics	4.3% (2)	93.6% (44)	0.0% (0)	2.1% (2)	100% (47)
Science	0.0% (0)	100% (47)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100% (47)
Quality	25.5% (12)	36.2% (17)	31.9% (15)	6.4% (3)	100% (47)
Technology	14.9% (7)	78.7% (37)	4.3% (2)	2.1% (1)	100% (47)
Crisis	0.0% (0)	74.5% (35)	0.0% (0)	25.5% (12)	100% (47)
Innovation	8.5% (4)	83.0% (39)	8.5% (4)	0.0% (0)	100% (47)
Excellence	2.1% (1)	42.6% (20)	44.7% (21)	8.5% (4)	100% (47)

Notes: “PR” stands for press release, “News” means the article, and the letters “Y” and “N” in parentheses next to each indicate a coding of “yes” or “no.” PR(Y)/News(Y) and PR(N)/News(N) depict instances when the publicity matched the press release and their combined percentages are included in the final column.

For RQ 1b, I asked to what extent the publicity referenced the press release. None of articles provided a link to the original press release. Table 4 depicts the frequency in which the articles directly quoted the press release or referenced it without quoting. The results reveal that it was rather rare for an article to directly quote the press release. Only 10.6% ($n = 5$) quoted the press release at all. However, the majority of the articles did reference the press release; 85.1% ($n = 40$) referenced the press release without quoting directly from it.

Table 4: References to the Press Releases

	0 Times	1-3 Times	4-6 Times	Total
Quote	89.4% (42)	6.4% (3)	4.3% (2)	100% (47)
Reference	14.9% (7)	83.0% (39)	2.1% (1)	100% (47)

Notes: Raw frequencies are in parentheses.

For RQ 2a, I asked how often the press releases used business marketing, social marketing, or both for each corporation. Table 5 shows the frequency that the press releases were coded as business marketing or social marketing. Neither type of marketing occurred a majority of the time in the press releases, but press releases were more likely to employ business marketing (25.5%) than social marketing (10.6%). There were no cases in which an article used both business marketing and social marketing.

Table 5: Presence of Business and Social Marketing in Press Releases

Type of Marketing	Present	Absent	Total
Business	25.5% (12)	74.5% (35)	100% (47)
Social	10.6% (5)	89.4% (42)	100% (47)

Notes: Raw frequencies are in parentheses.

For RQ 2b, I asked if there were differences in the match between press releases and publicity based on whether the press release uses business or social marketing. Table 6 depicts the results in terms of the percentage of the time each match or mismatch occurred followed by the raw amount in parentheses. There was a difference in match, with social marketing being more likely to match (89.4% of the time compared to 74.4%). However, the statistics for social marketing are affected by the fact that it was not coded as present in any article. This means that it matched perfectly every time a press release was coded as not having social marketing. Business marketing had more variance, which affected its match percentage. Because social

marketing was coded so little of the time, the differences in the match are not necessarily meaningful.

Table 6: Business and Social Marketing Match

Marketing Type	PR(Y)/News(Y)	PR(N)/News(N)	PR(Y)/News(N)	PR(N)/News(Y)	% Match
Business	2.1% (1)	72.3% (34)	23.4% (11)	2.1% (1)	74.4%
Social	0.0% (0)	89.4% (42)	10.6% (5)	0.0% (0)	89.4%

Notes: “PR” stands for press release, “News” means the article, and the letters “Y” and “N” in parentheses next to each indicate a coding of “yes” or “no.” The PR(Y)/News(Y) and PR(N)/News(N) columns depict instances when the publicity matched the press release and their combined percentages are included in the final column.

For RQ 3a, I asked how often press releases employ supplementation. Only eight press releases used supplementation. Because so few press releases used this technique, RQ 3b, which asked if press releases that employ supplementation demonstrate a higher level of match with their respective publicity compared to those that do not, is not tested.

Discussion

Overall, I found that articles based on press releases do tend to match the source in terms of the discourses used as well as business and social marketing, despite the fact that marketing strategies were not used in the majority of the press releases. In terms of RQ 1a, it is notable that articles do not appear to reiterate an Excellence discourse the majority of the time, which is the only type of discourse that did not exhibit a strong match. An Excellence discourse is likely a more biased position toward a corporation than the other discourses because it operates under the assumption that the company is achieving superior quality and value. Consequently, it would make sense for the articles to match this discourse less of the time if we assume that the media tries to be unbiased in its reporting. The fact that the Quality discourse was the next category that

was most frequently coded as present in the press release but not in the articles (31.9% of the time), also supports this idea. Again, this finding represents another more biased discourse toward a company because it is asserting ideas of continuous improvement and dedication to customer satisfaction. The concepts within these discourses are much harder for a media outlet to reiterate without exhibiting a bias compared to discourses such as Sales and Change, which are reporting factual events and profit figures. Discourses such as these are more informative and are therefore more easily reiterated without demonstrating bias. This explains many of the variations in the results. It is also noteworthy that the crisis discourse was only used in articles (25.5% of the time). This suggests a slight media bias against the companies, with companies framing unfavorable information in a more positive light while the media strips the rhetoric away and reports information more factually.

In terms of RQ 1b, articles are more likely to reference a press release than to use direct quotations. The match derives not from direct quotes, but from references to the press release, which most of the articles employed. This combined with the fact that none of the articles provided a link to the original press release demonstrates the desire of journalists to craft their own story instead of simply reiterating everything a company is saying. The fact that almost no articles directly referenced the press release more than three times speaks to this as well. However, despite the media's determination to write a story that is somewhat separate from the company's statements, the final effect was still a general match, both in terms of discourses and referential similarity. One can conclude, then, that the media tend to publish articles that are similar to the information that a company has released, but not without filtering it slightly in order to strip away corporate bias. Based on these results, companies can be satisfied with the success of their public relations strategies, at least in terms of their press releases. The media are

mentioning the “key messages” and are mostly matching the original intent of the press release (Wilcox et al., 2015, p. 14).

However, there were also some elements of the match that were hardly present or used at all. The two persuasion and organizational communication strategies, marketing and supplementation, were not used in the majority of the press releases. In response to RQ 2a and 2b, social and business marketing, although used minimally by the corporations in their releases, were only matched as a present in both a press release and an article one time across both marketing types. This demonstrates that even when a company infuses their press release with a marketing strategy (which is still not often), the news outlets almost never reiterate that in their articles. This suggests, as previously stated, a filtering of corporate bias and persuasive motives. In terms of RQ 3a and 3b, there also does not appear to be a relationship between supplementation and match, as most press releases did not use supplementation at all. It is possible that corporate press releases do not utilize supplemented material because they are announcements coming from the interior departments and personnel of the company. If the generated announcements are originally conceived by these actors, then there may be less of a need for supporting outside information. What can be concluded, then, is that companies are not using these two persuasive strategies often in their press releases and that when they do, the publicity does not typically match them.

Practical Implications

Companies can use this information by noticing the high level of match between the press releases and articles with the discourses. While using marketing strategies may not be effective in getting a match with the publicity, an article is more likely to reiterate the release’s information if a company can use a specific linguistic tool bag to construct its message.

However, a corporation can expect less success if it is using a more persuasive/biased discourse, such as Excellence or Quality. Companies can also experience some satisfaction with their press release efforts according to these results.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are a few limitations of this study that are worth mentioning. The first is the relatively small sample size. There was an average of 1.88 article and press release matches for each company out of a possible four (one for each of the elite news sources used). A future direction for this research could include a larger sample size, maybe with an analysis of the top 50 or 100 corporations that are included in the Fortune 100. Another possible direction would be to expand the amount of news media outlets used beyond just the elite group. However, this could create some issues with media bias, especially at a local level or with more opinionated news sources.

Another limitation of this study is that it only looks at the match between the press releases and their subsequent publicity, which is not the only component of a company's public relations strategy. Countless news articles were reporting on statements made by corporate leaders in interviews, conference calls, and private correspondence. There were also articles based off of social media activity and announcements made at conventions, conferences, or other events. A second consideration here is what corporations choose to publish in the newsroom section of their websites. Many corporations limit their press releases to financial statements, important leadership changes, partnerships with other companies, and new initiatives. Breaking news and controversial decisions such as oil spills, mass layoffs, and recalls were often not covered in the press releases, even though they appeared in the news article searches during the five-year period. It is possible that companies only publish press releases that they are confident

will be mostly matched by the publicity and use other components of corporate public relations to handle more controversial situations. In terms of this study, this could mean that the news media is not necessarily unbiased, but that they are not given sensitive information via press releases on which to write a more biased article. In order to pursue this further, a subsequent content analysis could be done to analyze the match between other components of corporate public relations, such as interviews, statements during press conferences, and social media activity, and their consequent publicity.

A third limitation is that this study only looks at the effectiveness of corporate public relations for the largest companies in the United States. Because most of these companies serve a global market and not just that of the United States, this research design could be implemented in a subsequent study to see if these companies achieve the same level of match with the public relations efforts in other countries. This study could also be imitated for not just the Fortune 100, but the top 100 companies across the globe. Finally, the study could be expanded to include nonprofit organizations, NGOs, and even government agencies in order to measure the effectiveness of press releases in the public sector.

Conclusion

The top 25 corporations in the United States, despite generally negative public perceptions of big business in the nation (Wilcox et al., 2015), are achieving a high level of match between the content of their press releases and the way they are portrayed by subsequent news media articles. This can potentially be attributed to the nature of the content that is selected for press releases. Typical topics for the releases including financial reports, corporate management personnel changes, the introduction of new services or products, and mergers or acquisitions. These announcements are often less controversial than corporate crises or scandals.

It is possible that corporate public relations departments purposefully select topics for releases that will be less controversial and more informative in nature in order to get the media coverage to closely match the release. The other components of corporate public relations should be analyzed in order to better understand the source of public mistrust of big business or where the mismatch is between corporate communications and public perceptions. However, at least for now, the public relations departments of these companies can be seen as achieving their goal to have the publicity match their released information.

References

- Carpenter, S. (2007). U.S. Elite and Non-Elite Newspapers' Portrayal of the Iraq War: A Comparison of Frames and Source Use. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 84(4), 761-776. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.library.arizona.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy2.library.arizona.edu/docview/216936697?accountid=8360>
- Fairhurst, G. T., 1951. (2010). *The power of framing: Creating the language of leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fortune 500. (2015). Retrieved November 24, 2015, from <http://fortune.com/fortune500/>
- Hall, P. (2004). Historical Perspectives on Nonprofit Organizations in the United States. *The Jossey-Bass Handbook of Nonprofit Leadership and Management*, 3-38.
- Monmonier, M.. (1986). The Rise of Map Use by Elite Newspapers in England, Canada, and the United States. *Imago Mundi*, 38, 46–60. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy2.library.arizona.edu/stable/1150868>
- Kim, B., Hong, S., & Cameron, G. (2014). What Corporations Say Matters More than What They Say They Do? A Test of a Truth Claim and Transparency in Press Releases on Corporate Websites and Facebook Pages. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 811-829.
- Perloff, R. (2003). *The dynamics of persuasion communication and attitudes in the 21st century* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Perry, M., & Bodkin, C. (2000). Content analysis of Fortune 100 company Web sites. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal Corp Comm: An Int Jnl*, 87-97.
- Schmutz, V., van Venrooij, A., Janssen, S., & Verboord, M. (2010). Change and continuity in newspaper coverage of popular music since 1955: Evidence from the united states, france, germany, and the netherlands. *Popular Music and Society*, 33(4), 501-515. doi:10.1080/03007761003694290
- Usley, C., Morgan, R., & Sheth, J. (2008). Peter Drucker on marketing: An exploration of five tenets. *J. of the Acad. Mark. Sci. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 47-60.
- Wilcox, D., & Cameron, G. (2015). *Public relations: Strategies and tactics* (11th ed.). Harlow, Essex: Pearson.

Appendix A

PRESS RELEASE CODEBOOK:

MARKETING STRATEGIES, SUPPLEMENTATION, AND DISCOURSES

12-13-15

I. Marketing Strategies

Social marketing is defined as the use of persuasive tactics to assert ideas that make up a social agenda. This is not merely an organization's official opinion on or action in a specific situation, but an overall stance on an issue or way of viewing the world. For social marketing to be present, an organization needs to be putting forth an idea about the way the world should be or what people should value. For example, the announcement of an organization's new initiative to build ground water wells in order to provide fresh water would not be coded, but further explanation about how the wells will promote public health would be coded.

Business marketing is defined as the use of persuasive tactics to sell a product or service. This includes favorable descriptions of the price, appearance, function, and experience of the product or service and testimonials and celebrity endorsements. For example, an announcement about a company's newest product flaunting its sleek improved design and cost-efficiency would be coded.

A press release can have both business marketing and social marketing present. For example, an announcement that a certain percentage of the profits from the sale of a specific item will go toward education would be coded as both business and social marketing.

I.

Variable Name	Variable	Coding Categories
V1) social marketing	Was evidence of social marketing present in the press release?	1=yes 2=no
V2) business marketing	Was evidence of business marketing present in the press release?	1=yes 2=no

II. Supplementation

In order for a press release to be considered supplemented, it must mention other bodies or figures of knowledge and credibility. Supplements are external sources of information, which means they cannot be employees, customers, or any internally generated statistics. For example, an announcement that a company will discontinue a certain flavor of chips due to a customer dissatisfaction survey would not be coded. However, if the company decided to discontinue the chips due to a government recall or a published medical report stating that the dye used can cause health problems, this press release would now be coded. In this case, each mention of a supplement, even if it is repeating the same source, is counted separately.

II.

Variable Name	Variable	Coding Categories
V1) supplementation	How often did the press release mention material that was supplemented from another source?	Enter the raw number

III. Discourses

Discourses are systems of thought that come with their own linguistic tool bags. The specific vocabulary used by a press release categorizes the central system of thought that is being presented. After reading the press release and paying attention to the way it discusses the information that is being presented, code which discourse(s) are being used. The vocabulary can be the same or synonymous to the examples listed here. A press release can easily fall into more than one discourse. In this case, code as many discourses as are present throughout the majority of the text. While this list is not exhaustive, these are the discourses to specifically look for. Any other type of discourse present will be coded as “other.”

Discourse	Focus Areas	Vocabulary Examples
Sales Marketing	Information related to distribution of a product or service	campaign, quota, delivery, production, profit, manufacturer, supply, demand, consumer
Change	Knowledge about change in organizations	vision, small wins, restructuring, strategic, different direction, rebranding, diversifying
Ethics	Knowledge related to moral responsibilities	values, accountability, responsibility, honesty, principles, moral, right, obligation, justice, equity
Science	Scientific principles, research with a scientific lens	controlled studies, control group, research, proven, quantitative, qualitative, groundbreaking, evidence, discovery
Quality	Total quality management	continuous improvement, zero defects, excellence, customer satisfaction, value
Technology	Knowledge of a technology's features, uses, or applications	apps, bandwidth, update, networking, compatible, high definition, modern, new
Crisis	Information related to an event that could lead to an unstable or dangerous situation	Urgent, threat, immediate, proactive, necessary, turbulence, uncertainty
Innovation	Information related to new	Cutting-edge, creative,

	processes, methods, products, or ideas within an organization	change, progress, progressive, forward-thinking, unique
Excellence	Surpassing typical standards or exceeding expectations, projections, and goals	Best, top-ranked, Fortune 500, peak, pinnacle, dominance, growth, continual improvement

III.

Variable Name	Variable	Coding Categories
V1) type of discourse	Which discourse(s) are being used in the press release?	sales marketing: yes/no change: yes/no ethics: yes/no quality: yes/no technology: yes/no crisis: yes/no innovation: yes/no excellence: yes/no

Appendix B

ARTICLE CODEBOOK:

DISCOURSES, REFERENCE TO PRESS RELEASE, AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

10-29-15

I. Discourses

Discourses are systems of thought that come with their own linguistic tool bags. The specific vocabulary used by an article categorizes the central system of thought that is being presented. After reading the article and paying attention to the way it discusses the press release, code which discourse(s) are being used. The vocabulary can be the same or synonymous to the examples listed here. An article can easily fall into more than one discourse. In this case, code as many discourses as are present throughout the majority of the text. While this list is not exhaustive, these are the discourses to specifically look for. Any other type of discourse present will be coded as "other."

Discourse	Focus Areas	Vocabulary Examples
Sales Marketing	Information related to distribution of a product or service	campaign, quota, delivery, production, profit, manufacturer, supply, demand, consumer
Change	Knowledge about complex change in organizations	vision, small wins, restructuring, strategic, different direction, rebranding, diversifying
Ethics	Knowledge related to moral responsibilities	values, accountability, responsibility, honesty, principles, moral, right, obligation, justice, equity
Science	Scientific principles, research with a scientific lens	controlled studies, control group, research, proven, quantitative, qualitative, groundbreaking, evidence, discovery
Quality	Total quality management, six sigma	continuous improvement, zero defects, excellence, customer satisfaction, value
Technology	Knowledge of a technology's features, uses, or applications	apps, bandwidth, update, networking, compatible, high definition, modern, new
Crisis		Urgent, threat, immediate,

		proactive, necessary, turbulence, uncertainty
Innovation		Cutting-edge, creative, change, progress, progressive, forward-thinking, unique
Excellence		Best, top-ranked, Fortune 500, peak, pinnacle, dominance, growth, continual improvement

I.

Variable Name	Variable	Coding Categories
V1) type of discourse	Which discourse(s) are being used in the article?	sales marketing: yes/no change: yes/no ethics: yes/no quality: yes/no technology: yes/no crisis: yes/no innovation: yes/no excellence: yes/no

II. Reference to Press Release

II.

Variable Name	Variable	Coding Categories
V1) link to original press release	Does the article provide a link to the original press release?	0=no 1=yes
V2) quotes of press release	How often does the article directly quote the press release?	0=0 times 1=1-3 times 2=4-6 times 3=7 or more times
V3) references to press release without quoting	How often does the article reference or reiterate the press release without quoting directly?	0=0 times 1=1-3 times 2=4-6 times 3=7 or more times
V4) similarity to press release	How similar is the article to the press release?	-1=not at all 0=somewhat 1=very

III. Marketing Strategies

Social marketing is defined as the use of persuasive tactics to assert ideas that make up a social agenda. This is not merely an organization's official opinion on or action in a specific situation, but an overall stance on an issue or way of viewing the world. For social marketing to be present, an organization needs to be putting forth an idea about the way the world should be or what people should value. For example, the announcement of an organization's new initiative to build ground water wells in order to provide fresh water would not be coded, but further explanation about how the wells will promote public health would be coded.

Business marketing is defined as the use of persuasive tactics to sell a product or service. This includes favorable descriptions of the price, appearance, function, and experience of the product or service and testimonials and celebrity endorsements. For example, an announcement about a company's newest product flaunting its sleek improved design and cost-efficiency would be coded.

An article can have both business marketing and social marketing present, or it can emphasize one strategy over the other. For example, an announcement that a certain percentage of the profits from the sale of a specific item will go toward education would be coded as both business and social marketing.

III.

Variable Name	Variable	Coding Categories
V1) social marketing	Did the article present evidence of social marketing in the organization?	1=yes 2=no
V2) business marketing	Did the article present evidence of business marketing in the organization?	1=yes 2=no