

PUBLIC RELATIONS VIS-A-VIS TECHNOLOGY AND GENERATIVE AI

INDUSTRY NOTES

Public **R**elations is the strategized use of technique and innovative ideas to create a positive image of a personality, product/ product range and companies. Traditional media like print, radio and television were being predominantly used till a few years. However, the last decade saw a phenomenal rise of the digital medium where the PR industry too adapted to the changes. It innovated with strategies to cover news portals and e-magazines which started having a better reach and impact on targeted consumers with mobile phones becoming an integral part of everyday life.

Not surprisingly, according to a report by Statista, a Statistics Portal for Data Market has predicted that the 'global PR market value will possibly reach \$129 billion by 2025. To get a better perspective, it was valued at just \$14 billion in 2016. According to Study of Public Relations Insights, Nuggets and Trends (SPRINT) conducted by Public Relations Consultants Association of India (PRCAI) in 2022-23 -'India's PR industry grew by 13% in 2022, but remains challenged by talent issues'. Moreover, the report estimated 'the Indian PR industry at \$260 million, accounting to about 8.5% of Asia Pacific and 1% of global PR industry.' While it plunged during the pandemic, 2022 saw the industry bouncing back with a 13% growth.

Digitization has also led 82% PR experts to put their faith on technology and them believing that it will greatly change the industry. While web analytics have emerged as the most effective tool being used by PR industry, marketing cloud, email automation, as well as CRM software have also played an essential role in this shift. The PR industry is already on its way to become data driven where every decision for the clients will be based on data, which will enable the PR strategists to hit the target with precision. Furthermore, the brand's performance will also be quantified and the impact of each PR campaign can then be analysed, continuing what works, and slowly down on activities that don't seem to work. No wonder, Data will become the new Oil for PR industry, to be mined and used judiciously for growth and success.

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It has been precisely due to this reason that traditional PR techniques like issuing Press Releases, conducting Press Conferences and interaction with journalists haven't become obsolete. But additional initiatives based on creative ideations have ensured that they are able to hit where it impacts the most.

Digital storytelling has emerged as the most preferred form of new PR strategies specifically due to massive digitalization of all sectors and not just the PR industry. 88% of PR specialists back digital storytelling as the future of PR. That is precisely why we are telling stories about brands, the struggles of the founders and also weaving stories around products, because all we want is to connect with our target audience. At the end of the day, stories stay with people rather than talking about elaborate USPs of the client.

Another buzz word doing the rounds nowadays is Generative AI, especially after the launch of ChatGPT. It is estimated that AI generated content will grow from 2% to 30% in the marketing industry, by 2025. Today Natural Language Generation (NLG) tools are being used that generate human-like language. While ChatGPT is popular, Anyword, QuillBot, and Jasper AI are also equally useful. For pictures too image Generation tools can be utilised that can create images from scratch with simple instructions or modify existing images to create a new perspective. DALL-E, NVIDIA's StyleGAN, and DeepArt.io are some of the popular image generation tools. As discussed above, digital storytelling is about to grow, AI enabled Video Generation like Synthesia, RunwayML, Artbreeder, and Vamify are bound to grow in popularity. Chatbot tools like Dialogflow, IBM Watson Assistant as well as Botpress that can interact in natural language

Many expect that the aforementioned innovations will impact PR as much as Marketing. However, one must tread with caution when it comes to using Generative AI for PR practices.

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It has been found that AI generated content often needs to be checked manually for factual errors. Besides, the industry centric stories that are ultimately published in the media will need inputs that use human intelligence, because they are being credited to a human being. It is most pertinent to understand at this point that Public Relations is a completely organic and editorial mode of communication, hence, there can only be assistance, but never reliance on a technological tool. Rather, it is about voicing the intrinsic thoughts and opinions from an industry perspective. It entails a judicious approach and meticulous, nuanced drafting. Also, when editorial stories validate the hard work of PR campaigns, the impact is unmatched, which cannot be recreated by AI.

It is undeniable that Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Machine Learning and Generative AI are a reality today and when used innovatively, they can streamline tasks that are time consuming, repetitive in nature and does not need human intervention. When used prudently, in combination with human intelligence, it will enable the team to devote more time to brainstorming over creative ideas and making innovative strategies that only a human brain can create.

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