Corporate Public Relations Management and Brand Image: Evidence from G Company

Xuan He[1], Supot Rattanapun[2]
[1,2]Master of Business Administration, International College, Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, Bangkok, Thailand
E-mail: 64808031038-2@ mail.rmutk.ac.th supot.r@mail.rmutk.ac.th

Abstract
The field of corporate public relations (CPR) has emerged to be one of the most significant and strategic management functions of organizations aiming to maintain positive relationships with their stakeholders and build favorable brand image in an increasingly competitive market. This study focused on the effect of corporate public relations management on brand image of G Company. In particular, corporate public relations management was studied in four aspects: corporate communication, media relations, CSR and crisis communication. The dependent variable was 'Brand image'. A quantitative research design was used. For demonstration purposes, data has been created from 300 customers/stakeholders of G Company and analyzed by descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. Table 3 shows that all four dimensions of corporate public relations management are positively related to brand image, with the results of the example findings showing this. The standardized differences in brand image for corporate communication, corporate social responsibility, crisis communication, and media relations were the highest, with standardized betas of .34 ($p < .001$), .27 ($p < .001$), .21 ($p < .001$), and .18 ($p < .01$), respectively. The four dimensions accounted for a total of 62% of the variance in brand image ($R^2 = .62$). The results show that through public relations management, positive perceptions of a company's stakeholders and stronger associations of the company's brand may be achieved. Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are proposed for G Company: To create a communication strategy that involves consistency in messages, transparency in communication with stakeholders, responsible behavior of the company, effective media engagement and timely response to crises.
Keywords: corporate public relations, brand image, corporate communication, media relations, corporate social responsibility, crisis communication

1. Introduction

In today's business landscape, companies compete with others not just on the basis of their products, prices, technologies, and distribution, but also on the basis of building positive relationships with stakeholders. Corporate public relations has thus evolved from being mainly publicity oriented to an important aspect of corporate communication and strategic management.
Public relations enables a business to reach its customers, employees, investors, government, communities, and the media as well as other businesses or stakeholders. Good public relations can help to convey organisational values, clarify decisions, address stakeholder concerns, enhance credibility and safeguard the reputation of the organisation.
Among the stakeholders, a corporate image and reputation are especially significant as they are likely to make judgments about the organisation based on their own experiences or through corporate communication. Gray and Balmer (1998) suggested that corporate identity, corporate

communication, corporate image, and corporate reputation are related concepts and need the attention of corporate managers. Likewise, Chun (2005) separated the concepts of image, identity and reputation and highlighted the conceptual connection between them.

Brand image is the stakeholder's perception and association with a brand. Keller (1993) conceptualized brand image in terms of brand associations held in consumers' memories. The significance of strong, favorable and unique associations is a key part of customer-based brand equity. Hence, communication activities that can influence the formation of such associations can be instrumental in enhancing the brand image.

The positive image of the brand is very important for G Company because information is distributed in traditional media, digital, social media, corporate websites, online communities and interpersonal communication. A negative message can quickly take hold and send a message of confusion if there is inconsistent communication about an organization's identity and values. A corporate PRM should, therefore, be managed in a systematic manner and not as a package of individual promotional measures.

Hence, this study seeks to investigate the corporate public relations management in terms of brand image and looks at four dimensions of corporate communication, media relations, corporate social responsibility and crisis communication.

Organizations frequently invest considerable resources in public relations activities without clearly determining which public relations dimensions contribute most strongly to stakeholder perceptions of their brands. Public relations activities may also be fragmented across departments, resulting in inconsistent messages, delayed responses, and insufficient stakeholder engagement.

For G Company, an important managerial issue is therefore whether its public relations management practices contribute meaningfully to brand image and which dimensions should receive greater managerial attention.

The central research problem can be expressed as follows:

To what extent does corporate public relations management influence the brand image of G Company?

1.1 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1. To examine the level of corporate public relations management of G Company in terms of corporate communication, media relations, corporate social responsibility, and crisis communication.
2. To examine stakeholders' perceptions of G Company's brand image.
3. To determine the relationships between the dimensions of corporate public relations management and brand image.

1.2 Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived levels of corporate communication, media relations, corporate social responsibility, crisis communication, and brand image of G Company?
2. Are corporate public relations management dimensions significantly related to G Company's brand image?
3. Which dimensions of corporate public relations management significantly influence G Company's brand image?

1.3 Research Hypotheses
The following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Corporate communication has a positive influence on brand image.
H2: Media relations has a positive influence on brand image.
H3: Corporate social responsibility has a positive influence on brand image.
H4: Crisis communication has a positive influence on brand image.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Corporate Public Relations Management
Corporate public relations refers to the systematic management of communication and relationships between an organization and its stakeholders. From a strategic perspective, public relations should contribute to organizational objectives by establishing communication processes through which organizations can understand stakeholders, communicate corporate positions, manage issues, and maintain mutually beneficial relationships.

The strategic importance of public relations is particularly evident when corporate communication is connected to reputation management. Hutton et al. (2001) found that reputation management had increasingly become an important philosophy underlying corporate public relations. This suggests that contemporary public relations management extends beyond publicity and incorporates the systematic management of stakeholder perceptions.

In this study, corporate public relations management is represented by four dimensions.

Corporate Communication
Corporate communication refers to planned communication used by an organization to present its identity, values, activities, products, strategies, and positions to internal and external stakeholders. Communication should be understandable, credible, timely, and consistent.

Consistency is particularly important because stakeholders form impressions through multiple information sources. Gray and Balmer (1998) demonstrated the close relationship among corporate identity, communication, image, and reputation. Accordingly, communication is not simply the transmission of information; it is part of the process through which stakeholders construct their perceptions of the corporation.

Media Relations
Media relations concerns the organization's interaction with journalists, news organizations, online media, influencers, and other communication intermediaries. Effective media relations can increase organizational visibility, provide credible information, facilitate public understanding, and enable organizations to respond to inaccurate or negative information.

The development of digital media has expanded this function. Organizations now interact with both professional media institutions and decentralized online audiences. Therefore, proactive media monitoring, rapid responses, accessibility of corporate information, and consistency across communication channels have become increasingly important.

Corporate Social Responsibility
Corporate social responsibility (CSR) represents organizational responsibility toward society and stakeholders beyond immediate economic transactions. CSR activities may involve environmental sustainability, community development, employee welfare, ethical business conduct, charitable activities, and responsible governance.

From a public relations perspective, CSR can strengthen relationships when corporate actions are perceived as authentic and consistent with organizational values. However, communication alone is insufficient; stakeholder perceptions are likely to depend on whether the organization's actual behavior supports its public claims.

Crisis Communication

Crisis communication refers to communication activities undertaken before, during, and after events that may threaten an organization's operations, stakeholders, reputation, or legitimacy. Effective crisis communication generally requires timely responses, accurate information, transparency, stakeholder sensitivity, and consistency.

Coombs (2007) emphasized the importance of selecting crisis-response strategies according to the characteristics of a crisis and the reputational threat confronting an organization. Crisis communication is therefore not merely reactive publicity; it forms part of strategic reputation protection.

2.2 Brand Image

Brand image refers to the perceptions, meanings, and associations stakeholders attach to a brand. Keller (1993) explained brand image as perceptions reflected through brand associations in consumer memory. These associations may involve product attributes, organizational characteristics, symbolic meanings, experiences, emotions, and evaluations.

A favorable brand image can therefore develop when stakeholders consistently associate an organization with positive characteristics such as reliability, quality, responsibility, professionalism, innovation, and trustworthiness.

Brand image should be distinguished conceptually from corporate reputation. Corporate image generally reflects stakeholder perceptions at a particular point or within a particular audience, whereas reputation is typically understood as a broader accumulated evaluation of an organization. Chun (2005) and Dowling (2016) highlight the importance of defining these related constructs carefully when developing organizational research.

For the present study, brand image refers specifically to stakeholders' overall perceptions and favorable associations concerning G Company.

2.3 Corporate Public Relations and Brand Image

Public relations management can influence brand image because stakeholders develop brand associations partly through information and experiences generated by the organization.

Corporate communication can strengthen brand image by communicating a clear and consistent organizational identity. Media relations can increase favorable visibility and facilitate credible communication with external audiences. CSR activities can create associations with social responsibility and ethical behavior. Crisis communication can preserve trust when unexpected negative events threaten existing perceptions.

This relationship is consistent with Keller's (1993) theoretical approach to brand knowledge because communication contributes to the creation, reinforcement, and modification of brand associations. It is also consistent with corporate image and reputation literature emphasizing the strategic relationships among organizational identity, communication, image, and stakeholder evaluation (Gray & Balmer, 1998).

The conceptual framework proposes four independent variables and one dependent variable.

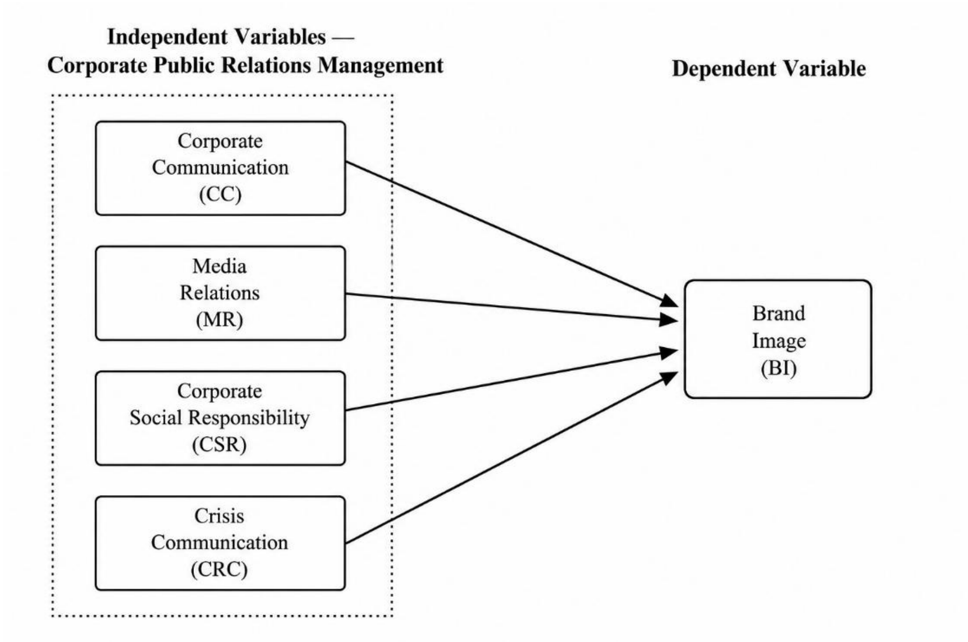

Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Thus, the model assumes that improvements in corporate public relations management will contribute to a stronger brand image for G Company.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to investigate the relationship between corporate public relations management and brand image. For purposes of illustrating the complete research process.

3.2 Population and Sample

The target population consisted of customers and stakeholders familiar with G Company and its corporate communication activities. Sample of 300 respondents was used for the statistical analysis. Respondents were assumed to have sufficient experience or exposure to G Company to evaluate its communication activities and brand image.

3.3 Research Instrument

A structured questionnaire was developed with three sections.

Section 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents.
Section 2: Corporate public relations management, comprising:
- Corporate Communication 5 items
- Media Relations 5 items
- Corporate Social Responsibility 5 items
- Crisis Communication 5 items

Section 3: Brand Image 5 items

All construct items were measured using a five-point Likert scale: Higher scores indicated more favorable evaluations.

3.4 Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of each measurement scale. An alpha coefficient of .70 or above was regarded as demonstrating acceptable reliability.

Table 1

Reliability of the Measurement Scales

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α
Corporate Communication	5	.88
Media Relations	5	.84
Corporate Social Responsibility	5	.89
Crisis Communication	5	.86
Brand Image	5	.91
Overall Instrument	**25**	**.93**

The example coefficients ranged from .84 to .91 for the individual constructs, while the overall questionnaire achieved $\alpha = .93$. Thus, all measurement scales demonstrated good internal consistency.

3.5 Data Analysis

The example data were analyzed using:

1. Frequency and percentage for demographic characteristics;
2. Mean and standard deviation for the study variables;
3. Cronbach's alpha for reliability;
4. Pearson's correlation coefficient for relationships among variables; and
5. Multiple regression analysis for testing the influence of corporate public relations dimensions on brand image.

The significance level was established at $p < .05$.

4. Results

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

Of the 300 respondents in the example dataset, 47.3% were male and 52.7% were female. The largest age group was 26–35 years (36.0%), followed by 36–45 years (28.0%), 18–25 years (20.7%), and 46 years or older (15.3%).

Approximately 42% had known or interacted with G Company for one to three years, while 34% reported more than three years of familiarity. These characteristics suggest that the hypothetical sample included respondents with sufficient exposure to evaluate the organization.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Corporate Communication	4.18	0.56	High
Media Relations	3.96	0.63	High
Corporate Social Responsibility	4.12	0.59	High
Crisis Communication	3.88	0.66	High
Brand Image	4.15	0.57	High

All variables were evaluated at a high level. Corporate communication obtained the highest mean among the public relations dimensions (M = 4.18, SD = 0.56), followed by corporate social responsibility (M = 4.12, SD = 0.59).

Crisis communication received the lowest mean (M = 3.88, SD = 0.66). Although still interpreted as high, this result indicates an area in which G Company could potentially improve its public relations management.

Brand image was evaluated positively overall (M = 4.15, SD = 0.57).

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3

Pearson Correlations Between Corporate Public Relations and Brand Image

Variable	CC	MR	CSR	CRC	BI
CC	1				
MR	.51**	1			
CSR	.48**	.46**	1		
CRC	.44**	.49**	.52**	1	
BI	.69**	.58**	.65**	.57**	1

Note. CC = Corporate Communication; MR = Media Relations; CSR = Corporate Social Responsibility; CRC = Crisis Communication; BI = Brand Image.
**$p < .01$.

All four corporate public relations dimensions were positively and significantly correlated with brand image.

Corporate communication showed the strongest bivariate relationship with brand image ($r = .69$, $p < .01$), followed by corporate social responsibility ($r = .65$, $p < .01$), media relations ($r = .58$, $p < .01$), and crisis communication ($r = .57$, $p < .01$).

These findings provide preliminary support for all four hypotheses.

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the relative influence of the four dimensions on brand image.

Table 4
Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Brand Image

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	0.52	0.16	—	3.25	.001
Corporate Communication	0.35	0.05	.34	7.00	< .001
Media Relations	0.16	0.05	.18	3.20	.002
Corporate Social Responsibility	0.26	0.05	.27	5.20	< .001
Crisis Communication	0.18	0.05	.21	3.60	< .001

Model summary: $R = .787$; $R^2 = .620$; Adjusted $R^2 = .615$; $F(4, 295) = 120.36$, $p < .001$.

The regression model was statistically significant and explained approximately 62.0% of the variance in brand image.

Corporate communication demonstrated the strongest influence ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$), followed by corporate social responsibility ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$), crisis communication ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$), and media relations ($\beta = .18$, $p = .002$).

Therefore:

Table 5
Hypothesis Result

Hypothesis	Relationship	Result
H1	Corporate Communication → Brand Image	Supported
H2	Media Relations → Brand Image	Supported
H3	Corporate Social Responsibility → Brand Image	Supported
H4	Crisis Communication → Brand Image	Supported

5. Discussion

The results showed that the relationship between corporate public relations management and the brand image of G Company is positive. All four dimensions were significant predicting factors, which confirmed the notion that brand image is determined by a number of communication and relationship-management activities, and not by a single public relations function.

The best indicator for brand image was corporate communication. The relationship between corporate communication and the perception of the stakeholders can be used to interpret this finding. Gray and Balmer (1998) pointed out that communication is a link between corporate identity and image and reputation. If an organisation consistently shares their identity, values, activities and commitments, then the stakeholder has greater information to draw upon with which to form their evaluation.

The result is also consistent with Keller's (1993) brand-equity framework. The brand image is formed by the associations that consumers remember. Favorable associations with reliability, professionalism, product quality, responsibility and organisational competence can be reinforced via consistent communication.

Second strongest predictor was corporate social responsibility. This discovery means that stakeholders can assess a business both on its business products and on its wider duties. Positive associations can be created and stakeholder confidence reinforced if the activities of the company are real, transparent and aligned to the organization's action.

There was a marked positive effect for crisis communication. While not all crises can be avoided, the reactions of organizations to negative events can shape how those events are perceived by stakeholders. Effective, accurate, timely and responsible communication can help to mitigate uncertainty and maintain stakeholder trust. This is in line with crisis communication theory that places a high value on the fit between an organization's response and a reputational crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Finally, media relations also had a significant predictive effect on brand image, but with a less standardized effect than the other dimensions. The first possibility is that stakeholders have access to a variety of sources of information, other than traditional news. Hence the media relations are becoming more and more a part of social media communication, digital content, stakeholder communication and even direct corporate communication.

The findings overall indicate that there is a need to adopt an integrated public relations management approach in which communication and media engagement, social responsibility and crisis preparedness are interdependent and work together to shape brand image.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between public relations management of a company and the image of a brand, as regards the context of G company. Four dimensions of public relations were suggested as possible factors to influence brand image: corporate communication, media relations, corporate social responsibility, and crisis communication.

All four dimensions were found to have positive statistically significant impact on the brand image on the basis of data gathered from 300 respondents. The most significant influence was exerted by corporate communication, followed by corporate social responsibility, crisis communication and media relations. The two dimensions accounted for 62% of the variance in brand image.

The results suggest that corporate public relations need to be identified more as a strategic management tool than just promotion. Communications and stakeholder management should be integrated and systematic for building strong brand images.

6.2 Managerial Recommendations

G Company needs to improve the integrated corporate communication: Key messages about the company's vision, values, products and service standards, and social commitments should be kept consistent on websites, social media, in press releases, in customer service, in advertising and in management communication.

Secondly, the company needs to have a proactive media-relations strategy. G Company should have ongoing contact with the relevant media, giving accurate and readily available information, rather than communicating essentially only when it has something of importance to say.

Thirdly, incorporating CSR into the corporate strategy and brand positioning of G Company. CSR activities should respond to relevant issues and problems of key stakeholders and the community and should be communicated honestly, without embellishment.

Fourth, there should be a formal crisis communication system set up by the organisation. This should involve risk monitoring, having designated Spokespersons, the approval process, having contact systems for various stakeholders, templates for crisis-response and social-media monitoring, as well as evaluation following the crisis.

Last, but not least, management needs to continually evaluate the performance of the brand and public relations. Regular questionnaires of stakeholders can help to surface evolving attitudes and enable the firm to assess if their communication activities are having the desired impact.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

The numbers used in this paper are not intended to be viewed as actual empirical data about G Company. Future research work should gather primary data from the actual customers of the company, employees, business partners, etc.

The model could be expanded to capture other concepts in the future such as corporate reputation, brand trust, customer satisfaction or customer loyalty as mediating or outcome variables. For further analysis of more complex relationships between corporate communication, trust of stakeholders, brand image, reputation, and behavioral intent, structural equation modeling might be used.

It would also be beneficial to have a longitudinal research that will explore the public relations activities and how they impact the company's performance.

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