



JOURNAL of SOCIAL and HUMANITIES SCIENCES RESEARCH (JSHSR)

Uluslararası Sosyal ve Beşerî Bilimler Araştırma Dergisi

Received/Makale Geliş 13.12.2021
Published /Yayınlanma 31.01.2022
Article Type/Makale Türü Research Article

Citation/Alıntı: Bekman, M. (2022). Description of the dominant approaches in public relations practices. *Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences Research*, 9(79), 60-67.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.26450/jshsr.2936>



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DESCRIPTION OF THE DOMINANT APPROACHES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES

HALKLA İLİŞKİLER UYGULAMALARINDA EGEMEN YAKLAŞIMLARIN BETİMLENMESİ

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to both explain the dominant approaches in public relations practices and describe the relations between them. How the basic communication theories are handled and applied in the field of public relations is an important issue. Therefore, in this study, primarily the theories put forward in the first half of the 20th century and the beginning of the second half will be examined and these theories will be compared with each other. Thus, a relationship will be established between theories that seem to be disconnected from each other, or even seem to have no relation with each other. Each theory represents a certain period and understanding. Establishing relationships and comparing theories will allow to see both their pros and cons. While these are being carried out, it will be discussed how dominant approaches are defined, examined, and applied in public relations, which is one of the important points of the communication field. As a result, this study aims to define, analyze, and compare the theories that emerged in different time periods of the communication field. In addition, the ways in which the approaches discussed here are applied in different ways in the field of public relations are also examined.

Keywords: Public Relations, Public Relations Practices, Target Audience, Communication Theories.

ÖZET

Bu makalenin amacı halkla ilişkiler uygulamalarında egemen yaklaşımların hem açıklanması hem de aralarındaki ilişkilerin betimlenmesidir. Halkla ilişkiler alanında temel iletişim kuramlarının nasıl ele alındığı ve uygulandığı önemli bir konudur. Dolayısıyla bu çalışmada öncelikli olarak 20. yüzyılın ilk yarısı ve ikinci yarının başında ortaya konmuş teoriler incelenecek ve bu teorilerin birbirleri ile kıyas edilecektir. Böylece birbirlerinden kopuk, hatta birbirleriyle ilişkileri yokmuş gibi görünen kuramlar arasında ilişki kurulacaktır. Her bir kuram belirli bir dönemi ve anlayışı temsil etmektedir. Kuramlar arasında ilişki kurmak ve karşılaştırmak hem artılarını hem de eksilerini görmeyi sağlayacaktır. Bunlar gerçekleştirilirken iletişim alanının önemli noktalarından biri olan halkla ilişkilerde egemen yaklaşımların nasıl tanımlandığı, incelendiği ve uygulandığı ele alınacaktır. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, iletişim alanının farklı zaman dilimlerinde açığa çıkmış kuramları tanımlamayı, analiz etmeyi ve birbirleriyle karşılaştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bununla beraber burada ele alınmış olan yaklaşımların halkla ilişkiler alanında farklı şekillerde uygulanma biçimleri de incelenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Halkla İlişkiler, Halkla İlişkiler Uygulamaları, Hedef Kitle, İletişim Kuramları.

Issue/Sayı: 79

Volume/Cilt: 9

jshsr.org

ISSN: 2459-1149

1. INTRODUCTION: PUBLIC RELATIONS AS A THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL PLANE

Although the history of public relations goes back centuries, its treatment as a concept date back to the 19th century. It coincides with the turn of the century. Understanding public relations requires understanding communication, interpersonal communication, and mass communication as a priority. However, the lack of a common concept in the literature regarding public relations stems from its multifaceted and interdisciplinary structure. Despite all the discussions in the literature, in this study, public relations are tried to be defined and explained within certain measures. From this point of view, it is dec to establish a connection between dominant communication theories and public relations.

In general, public relations aims to decisively maintain the communication processes between people and institutions with whom an institution communicates and can establish. In particular, it is important to direct the feelings and thoughts of the other party and to ensure that they have a positive attitude. That is why persuasion and perception come to the fore based on public relations. In the shortest possible time, public relations allow institutions to communicate healthily with their target audience and to actively maintain this established communication.

The service offered by public relations is to establish much more effective communication with the owned or targeted audience. Public relations ensures that certain attitudes and behaviors are revealed, that open an institution to the inside and outside, provide connections.

Public relations distinguish an institution from other institutions and make it out of the ordinary. Certain policies are implemented by public relations so that institutions have a positive reputation and display. That's why public relations determine the faces of institutions, both inside and outside. In the long term, the targets are shaped in this direction. In order to understand this process in more detail, it is necessary to look at the role and importance of public relations in communication processes.

1.1. The Importance of Public Relations in Communication Processes

With the globalizing world, the scope of the concept and content of communication is changing and increasing its importance. It comes from the Latin word *communis*, which means "to share, to divide" (Office of Technology Congress, 1995, p. 77). Therefore, communication is about thoughts, information, behavior, etc. It is explained in the form of studies carried out to ensure the dec of concepts between people and groups (Kayaalp, 2002). Communication is the transfer of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of people to the target in written, verbal and nonverbal ways (Tutar & Yılmaz, 2010). The individual develops, matures, increases his knowledge and experience throughout the communication process; expands the world. People who communicate with others form a part of society and maintain their existence. In other words, communication is an important and indispensable element for the individual (Kıral & Altay, 2007).

Digitalization, which is the most basic of globalization, forces communication tools to change along with it. Different tools are required for the individual to express himself/herself as a social being. The individual lives within the communication processes in the environment he is in. It becomes possible for the individual, who is a social being, to share his thoughts, wishes and needs in different ways. In this context, the main goal in creating communication is to convey messages that are understandable and to make a difference in the attitudes and behaviors of the other party.

From the point of view of public relations, the situation is no different. Along with the new world order and rapidly changing technological devices, the ways and means of communication that the organization will establish with its target audience are also changing. Although public relations are an administrative function, its main purpose is to communicate like an individual. Every moment and step of this communication process is based on the foundations of persuasion. This persuasion process is aimed at creating a change in the attitudes and behavior of the target audience of the institution.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SOVEREIGN APPROACHES

The dual approach is dominant in the history of communication studies. The first theory is empirical studies carried out in America. The second is the critical tradition that has its origins in Europe and is fed by Marxism. Both theoretical approaches try to explain the role played by communication tools to different extents. In empirical studies, the position and usage practices of communication tools come to the fore. In the course of the article, these theoretical studies are also examined in general. Critical theory, on the other hand, subjects the social order in which the means of communication are located to

criticism from an economic, ideological, and cultural point of view. However, in this section, the sovereign approaches, which have an important place in communication theories, will be discussed one by one. After explaining and describing these approaches, Frankfurt School will be mentioned only as an example of a critical point of view.

2.1. General Communication Model: Harold Laswell

In this model, communication is considered to be a linear line. According to this line, people or institutions transmit their messages to viewers or listeners through various intermediaries. In case of realization of the transmitted message, viewers or listeners can be influenced as desired (Laswell & Kaplan, 1950).

In the model "who?" the question constitutes the source of the message. The main issue that stands out at this stage is the plausibility of this question, as well as its characteristic elements. The names representing the countries in the early 20th century set an example for leaders with high credibility. Today, some popular names give confidence as "who". Based on the above statements, there is no change in the concepts despite some differences in perception. The message that emerges in this direction, as will be emphasized in the following parts of the study, appears to be the material element of "effect". It is important whether the concept of "what", which can be expressed as the stance that the concept of impact is at the forefront, will provide this effectiveness or not. The content of the subtext of the message on the topic that wants to be transmitted to the society is at least as important as the message, and in the process "through which channel?" the question indicates the transfer method.

In the type of communication between individuals, verbal and written methods can meet these channels. However, the prominent communication here is the mass media. Considering the period in which the model in question was put forward, it is possible to suggest that the vehicles mentioned by Laswell in the model are radio and TV. There are advantages and disadvantages that arise as a result of the functional use of these tools on the subject of the model. In today's conditions, there are some differences between the transmission of messages with internet technologies and the transmission over TV and radio.

Although it is thought that the model is not very sufficient in terms of differences as of the period, this model offers very important ideas to the models developed in line with technological approaches in the following years. The "who?" appears in the model. The answer to the question reveals the buyer. The buyers that are meant here can be expressed as masses or societies.

In the developed communication model, "to whom?" The question is in the center. However, the situation that stands out here is that the person who assumes the role of receiver in the model does not have a function other than receiving the messages. In the model, the recipients accept the messages sent to them without hesitation. An assessment of the accuracy of these messages is not made by the recipients.

The concept of knowing back, which is included in the models that emerged in the later periods, is not included in this model. In the model, the individual who seems like the message recipient is considered as items that do not affect the system. Although this situation revealed the weakest area of the model, it is possible to state that this model came to the fore when evaluated under the conditions of the period. Today, this model is the basis of many models. Just give feedback etc on the basics of these models additions have been made. Because, in today's conditions, there is a "who?" does not exist. However, it can be seen that some TV programs continue their activities in line with outdated approaches, creating the perception that there is an unthinking audience. Even though such a situation does not exist, it is ironic that the said programs are followed by the masses (Laswell & Kaplan, 1950).

Another expression at the base of the model is "with what effect?" emerges as a question. The starting point of the model in question is the concept of "influence", which is in the field of political science, and the search queries that emerge within the propaganda processes. Recipients ask "who?" with a message conveyed within the model in which is considered ineffective. It is discussed that buyers can be influenced by (Laswell & Kaplan, 1950).

Public relations practitioners of institutions still prefer mass media despite its linear and one-way structure. Although technology and the internet seem to have replaced many things, these tools still have a great impact on reaching the masses.

2.2. Mathematical Communication Theory: Shannon and Weaver

In information theory, in which statistical approaches come to the fore, the concept of communication is evaluated. A study by Shannon (1948) is considered as the starting point of this theory. The main issue that came to the fore in this period is how effective communication will be provided and how encryption will be implemented. Acting in this understanding, Shannon aimed to develop a theory with mathematical content and in this direction, the foundations of information theory were laid. There has been a continuous improvement in the content of this theory over time, and as a result, the theory has exceeded the limits of engineering.

In the communication process, information draws attention as a prominent concept. The main reason why the concept of information comes to the fore in the process is that it can be measured as a quality rather than a definition. As a result of the transmission of one of the unlimited states in the source of the information to the outside, the transfer process of the information towards the final point begins. Depending on the calculation of the probabilities that come out, an idea about the amount of information can be obtained (Shannon, 1948).

It is possible to evaluate the information source in the theory as a system in which message sequences are produced. The message produced within the system emerges by exporting one of the unlimited states.

The information shared by the public relations with the target audience has become more controllable and reproducible according to the feedback with the developing technology. The continuous flow of information to the target audience for the institution is also very important in terms of sustainability.

2.3. Towards the Solution of Impact Theory- Two-Stage Flow Model: Lazarsfeld and Berelson

In line with the theory, the flow that emerges in the communication process is evaluated in two stages. In the first part of these stages, there are people who are expressed as opinion leaders, who benefit from mass media and who have a high level of interest in the subject. In the second stage, there are people who have a lot of affiliation with the mass media and whose level of knowledge has not been sufficiently developed. As a result of the evaluation of the groups included in the two stages, a partially inaccurate analysis is performed in accordance with the data obtained. As a result, the decisions of societies that do not evaluate mass media effectively can be guided by leaders within the society in accordance with their wishes (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944).

In the developed two-stage flow model, it is possible to directly transfer the messages transmitted through the mass media to the isolated individuals who make up the mass, and it is often aimed to create public opinion on these leaders by first decoding the codes on the opinion leaders and making evaluations about them.

Public relations practitioners currently use opinion leaders to influence the target audiences of institutions. Sometimes these opinion leaders can be from the leaders, and sometimes they are in the form of celebrities. Opinion leaders become influencers with technology and social media, which is one of its benefits. The individual follows the comments and opinions of the influencer, and even tends to buy the product or service of the institution according to the directions.

2.4. Cultural Indicators and Cultivation Theory

After 1970, it emerged as a period when the influence of television was mostly investigated in communication research. The models presented during this period are also aimed at understanding the effects of television on the audience. Cultural indicators and the Cultivation Model were put forward as the first important example of these studies. According to this model, which is shaped by the views and findings of George Gerbner and referred to as the Annenberg School, in contemporary societies, people increasingly engage with television instead of real social relations.

Television is in all sectors of society and presents a certain worldview through repeated, pervasive patterns. Commercial television, effectively abstracted from the hands of the public, has been removed from public participation through direct consumer, marketplace, movie theater, and ballot boxes (Gerbner & Gross, 1976).

Within the theory, it is thought that the viewers tend to accept the meanings expressed by the cultural elements in the television world. In this structure, especially violent images are effective. For this reason, there is an increase in the perception of danger due to watching television and an exaggerated sense of

insecurity is given. The processing of social conditions is the basis of the mainstream that emerged in television, and changes in these conditions can bring about changes in the mainstream (Gerbner, 1998).

Public relations still manage a perception study that violence and disasters are common in the mainstream media, increasing the purchasing behavior of institutions, especially insurance companies, for their products and services. With the effect of perceptions created through mass media, the individual tries to eliminate the feeling of insecurity by purchasing products and services.

2.5. Agenda Setting

Setting an agenda can be expressed as determining what people in a society will talk about, think about, or have information about. The agenda setting theory is the management of the process in which the agenda is put forward in the public opinion. In this direction, the agenda setting theory is the interaction of the issues on the agenda of both elements in the context of the relations between the political institution and the media. This model can be expressed as the way the media chooses or presents the news and determines the topics that the public speaks, discusses, and thinks about (Güneş, 2014, p. 3). Agenda setting theory responds to the needs that exist in order to direct individuals. In addition to orientation, psychological factors are among the tools used by the agenda setting theory in order to be convincing. In the agenda-setting activity, the public, who is in the position of the audience, focuses on what they hear and learn from the mass media (McCombs, 2005, p. 548).

In this direction, the thoughts and behaviors of individuals begin to be limited entirely by what they see in the media. Understanding the effects of agenda setting theory on society and individuals is very important in terms of analyzing the media.

The media uses the basis of agenda-setting theory when determining the issues that individuals and society will think about. Apart from this point, the guiding power of the media is not very effective in choosing how the individual will behave. Subjects are presented to the individual about talking, thinking, and lingering, but as a result of this agenda setting work, the individual decides how to act. In other words, with agenda setting, there is only reference and impact to the issues that individuals will consider.

When the factors in the literature on agenda setting are examined, one of the most important issues that arise is the great influence of the media. The result of this is that the effect desired to be created in the public opinion with the agenda setting theory is combined with the power of the media to influence society and people (Yüksel, 2007, p. 577). With the development of technology, it is understood that the effects of agenda setting theory have increased due to the increasing role of mass media and media on society and people's lives.

Political factors are one of the important building blocks of agenda setting. The reason for this is the high level of relationship between agenda setting and media, especially during political elections. In this context, politics itself and the factors related to politics are among the basic elements of agenda setting theory (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006, p. 89). Agenda setting through the media directly affects political factors and political processes and affects the decision-making processes of the society. This situation results that individual in the political arena has a stronger interaction with media tools. Media-politics interaction is shaped in this direction in the focus of agenda setting theory.

It is observed that the agenda setting theory is used more often within the framework of public-oriented projects and issues (Göker & Dogan, 2011). It should also be stated that the agenda setting theory creates awareness about the chosen topic in people and gives them the opportunity to access information about the topic together with this awareness. Along with this theory, a topic that concerns a wide segment of society is brought to the fore and public opinion tries to be influenced by establishing a political or social connection on this issue.

When social media is looked at in a tangential way, it is seen that the agenda setting theory is evaluated on a project basis. Social networks, which are user-generated content communities, are frequently used to set the agenda in public relations studies, especially on political issues. The main purpose of the accounts opened by political parties in social networks and the applications of important brands in social networks are to manage the perceptions of the individual and society by functionalizing the agenda setting theory.

Although agenda setting in public relations practices seems to come to the fore in political periods, it is a theory that is highly needed in lobbying activities or agreement processes for institutions. The perception of the target audience about the institution can also be reconstructed with the agenda setting

theory. To understand and perform a much better analysis of this entire process, a critical point of view is needed, hence the theoretical background of critical theory.

2.6. Frankfurt School

The Frankfurt School, which looks at the concept of criticism from a dialectical perspective, defines criticism as the social structure in which they live, the political system, modernization, positivism, etc. He has used it as a fundamental tool in evaluating theories such as. The main thing is that the principle of "the other" is preserved. The obligation of everything to respect other than itself, more importantly, the right of everything to be other than itself is an important description in understanding the Frankfurt School and its dialectical criticisms. The Frankfurt School and the Critical Theory, which is essentially mentioned together and interpreted in many ways, has a complex structure.

The transition from an industrial society to a technology or information society does not mean that a different form of society has been formed from capitalist regular society and that the contradictions in capitalism have been overcome. Existing contradictions deepen in the information society by occurring in different forms in the repetitive establishment of the production and information relationship. For this reason, it is not a correct and valid proposition to state that the information society has a structure that is far from contradictions. While people have the opportunity to continue their lives at a higher level of efficiency compared to the past, within the possibilities offered by technological developments; On the other hand, the same developments can turn the life in the world into incomprehensible captivity and nightmare for people (Ahiska, 2002, p. 112). In other words, it is not possible to name the technological revolution, which has a fragmented spirit, as an era of freedoms and an era of mechanization in which human actions begin to become insignificant.

The fact that some of the negativities that arise for people as a result of the developments in technology today have much more precise limits, brings the idea that it is no longer possible to change anything with human intervention. Together with the technological steps that are thought to accelerate its development with the idea of freedom, it prepares an environment where it is much more difficult to find answers to questions such as how the resources available in the world are distributed and for what purposes. This situation, which emerges in line with the internal dynamics of technology, unfortunately makes people more obscure in life (Ahiska, 2002).

Max Horkheimer of the Frankfurt School shows the relationship between technology and progress as the cause of the individual's decline (1998). As long as the understanding of progress is perceived as technological progress, it directly makes the idea of domination over nature absolute and as a result turns itself into a static concept. When motion becomes abstract, detached from its human purpose and social context, it becomes only an illusion of motion, an evil infinity of mechanical repetition. Thus, on the one hand, progress is glorified as a high ideal, on the other hand, the contradictions of progress serve to perpetuate the contradictions of society (Horkheimer, 1998). Technology is not often seen to have contradictory characteristics.

As a matter of fact, these contradictory features gradually gain depth with the blind development of technology. Because this problematic development strengthens social exploitation and oppression, progress risks turning into its own antithesis, barbarism (Horkheimer, 1998, p. 144).

In everyday life, which has become technological, it becomes easier and legitimate to reproduce these contradictory situations. When viewed in this context, the practices of daily life legitimize technical knowledge and become the tools that constitute the application environment of this type of knowledge. In short, technology; it is deeply embedded in every aspect of the daily life of the information society (Ahiska, 2002, p. 115). For those who look at this issue from a historical perspective, there are debates about whether a new age is approaching, the events in which the relations in the field of study and in the society have undergone radical changes and it is necessary to re-evaluate the era.

However, from an economic perspective, the current time is defined as a knowledge-based economy. In summary, the knowledge-based economy can be explained as the wealth in developed countries not only from strong and large industry, but also that they hold the power of knowledge, and that they earn income from jobs based on knowledge.

3. CONCLUSION

In this study, the most basic approaches of communication theories are both described and analyzed in a comparative way. However, in order to understand the process more clearly, the whole discussion has

been moved to the field of public relations and discussed in the axis of public relations practices. It is important to consider public relations once again, which are the central elements of the communication process, together with the dominant theoretical approaches. Therefore, it is unnecessary to conduct a public relations study and discussion alone. Because, considering public relations together with the basic and dominant theories of communication offers new and different perspectives. Public relations are not a field that is stuck in itself and can be evaluated on its own. In particular, it is not possible to deal with communication theories separately. It is not enough to consider public relations as a new field as an integral part of communication processes.

Dealing with the dominant theories of public relations and communication together provides much more productive results. In this context, the linear nature of Laswell's general communication model has been expressed. In this model, the message or content is presented directly to the viewer using certain tools. With the message presented, it is aimed to directly influence and direct the audience. Shannon and Weaver, on the other hand, discussed communication in line with a mathematical theory and approach. In this order, the information is transmitted as it is without any errors. Statistics and numbers, as well as the engineering approach, come to the fore. The basic understanding deals with how to ensure very effective and efficient communication.

However, over time, the effect theory was solved, and the two-stage flow model was put forward by Lazarsfeld and Berelson. With this theoretical approach, it has been proved that communication processes are not based on a single and continuous process as much as predicted. For example, opinion leaders are competent in changing and directing the information disseminated through mass media.

Another approach is the cultural indicators and cultivation theory expressed by Gerbner. Especially in this approach, which has been the center of television since the 1970s, the audience is focused on. In an order where people are increasingly addicted to television, television and human relations are increasing in importance. Setting an agenda in a similar way with this theory also increases its effectiveness. What people will talk about is provided by setting the agenda. It is thought that the public is strongly guided by the agenda setting theory. It is seen that all kinds of media content direct and manipulate people.

At this point, the Frankfurt School, which was important in the 20th century, can be looked at. Because the Frankfurt School analyzed very strongly how power manipulates the masses, numbs them, and directs their ideas. In particular, the conceptualization of the "culture industry" and the shaping of cultural products and the production processes of culture in line with mass production and capitalist ideology has been subjected to criticism.

As a result, this whole process has affected the field of public relations to the fullest and public relations practices have also changed. A similar process continues today, and public relations practices are changing in accordance with the requirements of the era and theoretical approaches.

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