PUBLIC RELATIONS IN INDIA

- **<u>Introduction of the term "Public Relation":</u>** Public relations in India were introduced around 1930s. This term was brought to India by the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO). The Tata's were involved in various related functions like community relations, employee engagement, economic development of communities, social-cultural engagement of communities, etc. later in 1943 the Tata's have opened an entire department for public relations in 1943 in Mumbai, India.

- **<u>In the eyes of Media:</u>** The vast usage of media came into existence in India preceding the years before independence from the British rule. At the time newspapers were used to communicate objectives and other leadership motives. After the independence, the media began to expand rapidly. The years following independence (1947), media companies began to explore new technologies and new channels of communications.

  Around this time the Indian government introduced various policies such as **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**, etc. From 1990s the industrial market began to expand rapidly in India. The industries and corporate companies began to see a big market in India and focused to expand their in ventures throughout the Indian market. Hence, they understood the importance of public relations in India during expansion. In India reaching the large market is quite difficult. It requires a lot of analysis and experience to influence the larger audience because India has a very diverse population. With about 29 states, and each state having a number of districts, there are various dialects spoken in India. Each state has its own customs, traditions and language. Apart from that, each district is unique its own way. There are various slangs and alterations in a language of a state among its districts. Hence forth it was a challenge for the industries to market and convey their objectives to the public.

  In light of this growing need, various public relations agencies began to emerge. Global agencies like Ogilvy & Mather, MSL Group, Genesis Burson Mastellar, etc. began to expand their market to India.

- **<u>Today's Market:</u>** In the 2000s, various societies and associations like Public Relations Society of India (PRSI), Public Relation Consultants Association of India (PRCAI), etc. were established. In spite of less impact of Global Economic Crisis on India in 2008, other factors have contributed to the fluctuation of PR demand in the country.

1) Firstly, on January 7, 2009, Ramalinga Raju, the erstwhile **chairman of Satyam Ltd., India's leading IT firm**, made an admission of conscious fraud & misreporting perpetrated by him over several years. The media who had eulogized him till then suddenly turned on him with a vengeance, conscious that they had also failed in their duty as watchdogs of businesses. This crisis coincided with the peak of the global crisis and held the potential to snowball into credibility & trust issue for brand India and its IT firms, where several billion dollars' worth of services were being outsourced every year. The crisis also impacted several companies associated with Satyam including EMRI (Emergency Medical Response Institute), a not-for-profit endeavor (for running free ambulance services) in which Satyam had committed 5% of running costs with the balance 95% coming from various state governments.

2) After the global slowdown it hit that Indian Public relation agencies in 2008, it took a further hit in November 2010 due to what has come to be known as the **'Radiagate' scam**. Open Magazine in an expose, covered the story of Niira Radia's nefarious power-dealings. This story went viral in twitter and Facebook. An Income Tax phone tap collected more than 5000 tapes and hundreds of these tapes were leaked and found their way into Outlook magazine's website. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) interrogated Radia several times and as fallout of the tapes, the Telecom minister, A. Raja, with whom Radia had close links was also forced to resign. Several prominent journalists like Barkha Dutt and Vir Sanghvi were also in the middle of the quagmire, caught in power-lobbying conversations with Radia.

Despites a few crisis situations like the above; the PR industry in India had regained its position in the recent years. Public relations are a thriving profession in India. There are hundreds of large and small PR consultancies in the country, employing thousands of practitioners. Most companies in private sector and almost all companies in the public sector have public relations departments. According to a survey conducted by the **Associated Chamber of commerce and Industry** in India (Assocham, 2012), the PR industry in India is **growing** at an annual rate of **32 percent**. Many believe the definition of traditional PR has undergone a change. PR in its new avatar not just encompasses media relations and employee communication, but is used increasingly for strategic communication, brand building, customer relations and crisis management. From an executive function, PR is now becoming a part of the high-level management job touching upon the core values of an organization. PR in India is fast emerging as an institution especially with its growing acceptance as a skilled and specialized profession.

- **<u>PR trends and analysis in India:</u>**

    1. The major similarity we can compare PR practice in India to our modules is that the traditional definition of PR i.e., performing singular tasks such as press releases, etc. has been redefined. PR in India is focusing on a more strategic aspect mainly focusing on brand strategy, image building and consumer data.
    2. Though many parts of India have caught up with the global practices of PR, some places in South India seem to define their own definition and strategies of PR. This concept started with ***Regional PR*** firms and they have focused more on **B2P** (Business to people) commerce clients. These B2P strategies have brought the regional PR firms quite some market in South India.
    3. Apart from this, there is a major boost to **start-up companies** in India due to the revised policies and advantages offered by the new government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This vast market of start-ups lacks the trained pool of PR professionals. Hence it is of immense need to adhere to the communication of importance of public relations to this growing market.
    4. On the other hand, social media has a huge market in India and is ever-growing. For instance, **Indian Premier League cricket** team Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) ran a talent hunt to select three fans for an online reality show where they had full access to the players. The objective was to build a highly engaged community with regular content created by players, experts and fans. Consequently, the RCB community has more than 5, 00,000 fans across channels.
    5. Despite the global economic troubles and a fluctuating market, India continues to **grow at 7 per cent.** Imagine the growth when the good times return! Not only will the PR industry continue to grow, it will become critical for established Indian companies and foreign firms looking to build brands here.
    6. The industry is also expanding and discovering new verticals — healthcare, for instance. At Rs.1,62,000 crore ($36 billion) industry today, it is growing at a rate of 15 per cent and is likely to be a Rs.12,60,000 crore ($280 billion) industry by 2022. With the advent of private players such as **Fortis, Wockhardt and Apollo** — all of whom are conscious of their brands and the need to grow — demand for PR and an integrated strategic communications approach will be felt strongly.

- **<u>Scope for further improvement:</u>**

    1. Firstly, there are very few universities and colleges that offer a full-time degree in public relations. Nowadays, colleges have begun to offer a few courses in public relations but it has not reached its full potential. Thus colleges and PR agencies should have more tie-ups and engage prospective students in PR degrees.

2. **PRSI** and **PRCAI** should work closely with PR agencies and academic institutions for further innovation of research tools and projects leading to new collaborations.
3. Various programs and initiatives should be taken to convey the need, importance and advantages of public relations among the entrepreneurial crowd and existing conglomerates in India.
4. The integration of public relations along with corporate communications, advertising, integrated marketing communications, digital marketing, etc. should be encouraged and employed by the PR agencies.
5. Finally more global PR agencies should encourage the regional PR agencies by collaborations and the national PR agencies should be encouraged to explore the foreign market as well to gain a wider understanding and exposure.

- **References:**

1. http://prcai.org/
2. http://www.prsi.co.in/prsi.htm
3. https://www.google.co.in
4. http://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/the-ratan-tata-barkha-dutt-other-tapes/268068
5. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/
6. http://www.thehindu.com/
7. http://www.timesnow.tv/

-Done By
Meghana Gowni