

Public Relations Journal
Special Issue: Public Relations Practices in Asia (August 2017)
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Editor's note on the special issue of *Public Relations Journal*: Public Relations Practices in Asia.

This special issue of *Public Relations Journal* focuses on public relations practices in Asia. The editors define Asia loosely to include several countries in the region. The research studies published in this issue were presented at the 2016 International Communication Association post-conference on Strategic Communication in Asia, which took place in Kyoto in June 2016. The post-conference discussed current trends and challenges in practicing strategic communication in Japan, Indonesia, and South Korea, among other countries, and focused on the convergence between the public relations and advertising industries. Although participants have not agreed on one conclusion, they covered some pivotal points and asked many good questions about the nature of the public relations and advertising industries.

In this issue, you will find a mix of contemporary scholarly thought about public relations in Asia and beyond. We begin with a summary of the round-table discussion at the post-conference, which discussed current trends in the industry in Japan and elsewhere in the region. Views on the Japanese public relations industry and its development from three Japanese professionals, Natsuko Mochizuki, Yusuke Ibuki, and Koichi Yamamura, are quite insightful. This summary will help readers better understand why the lucrative Japanese market is still off limits for many Westerners and how this may change in a near future.

The next two articles focus on specific examples of communication practices in the region. First, the study by Simorangkir and Pamungkas focuses on political communication through storytelling in the 2014 Indonesia presidential election campaign. The campaign attracted massive interest throughout the world, and Indonesians, for the first time, became active in campaigning for the candidates, Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo (commonly referred to as Jokowi). Strategies that were used by their supporters ranged from the use of smear campaigns to the use of creative art. One form of creative art that was used by the volunteer supporters of Jokowi included *Tintin*-style (from the comics by Hergé) posters and other print materials that depicted Jokowi as a hero. The campaign has gone viral online. Through the art of storytelling, Jokowi was successfully portrayed as the people's leader, who is humble and down-to-earth and who represents the proletariat. This study demonstrates the power of narrative and storytelling that heavily relies on elements of local pop culture to achieve its communication goals.

Next, Nguyen and Tsetsura offer a look at media relations in Vietnam. They focus on understanding the phenomenon of media transparency and its relation to gift giving in cultures having a long history of gift-giving practices. The authors demonstrate that public relations practitioners in Vietnam experience tensions between what they believe is professionally appropriate and what they see as culturally acceptable as they engage in media relations practices. Nguyen and Tsetsura offer practical solutions for handling media relations and non-

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transparent practices to public relations practitioners who work in Vietnam and other countries in the region, which have strong gift-giving traditions.

The final article in this issue offers a comparison of 113 advertising, public relations, IMC, and strategic communication programs to better understand how, if at all, these fields are distinguished from those in the USA. The authors conclude that, despite much focus on integrated and strategic approaches, many programs still offer separate introductory, writing, design, and campaign courses for both advertising and public relations majors, while a small portion of universities provides combined courses for both majors. The authors discuss their findings' implications for curriculum development and integration of advertising and public relations to match the growing needs of the industry.

The editor hopes that you will enjoy this special issue of *Public Relations Journal* and believes that the research presented here will generate discussion and inspire other research on public relations practices in Asia and beyond. I would like to thank the authors and the anonymous reviewers for their contributions to this issue and my colleague Dr. Dean Kruckeberg and my graduate research assistant Adam Pitluk for their help in preparing the manuscripts for publication.

Katerina Tsetsura

Editor of the special issue