

# The public information model



By the early of 1920s, the Press Agency Model has been criticized as deception model by large corporations and started to lose credibility among the journalists (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Ivy Lee, a former journalist turned to Public Relations practitioner recognized the problem and established Declaration of Principles to journalists. By that time Public Relations has taken the changes from on accuracy in communication and more concerned with truthful information distribution than manipulating the news (Kaid, 2004). Thus, this practice has eventually contributed to the rise of Public Information Model.

Public Information Model basically is to inform the public without carry any emphasizing promotion and publicity. This model does not seek to direct persuade or change the attitude of the public but is to disseminate any relevant information to them. Therefore, it is thus predicated that if the public has sufficient information that is relevant and truthful about the organization, then the public will believe and behave to what the organization desired. In Public Information Model, Public Relations practitioners often being refer as the “journalist in residence”, whose job is to report objectively information about their organizations to the public (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

In addition, Public Information Models explained the importance of maintain and enhancing the image of the company or organizations by disseminating information to the target public. It has been characterized as a one way communication techniques used by Public Relations practitioners. Although both Press Agency and Public Information Model has been characterized as one way communications, the Public Information model differs because the

purpose is to giving out clear and factual information to the public. In fact, this model is a one way communication where the process start off with information flows from sender (PR practitioners of the organizations) to the receiver (target audience or public). This technique included press release, features story, video release or any communication related to the information of the company that is directed among the public

In this model, a good Public Relations practitioner is able to disseminate the information by putting in their organizations ideas or approaches and uses it to influences their target public. Therefore in this model, Public Relations practitioner has to constructs their writing in creative and informative way. This creative can be applied into the newsletter of the company, magazine, brochures with any related information about the organizations like the products, testimonials, organization's successful background, top management people and etc.

People are exposed to different kind of media messages in their daily life. Mass media are very important particular on Public Relations Practitioner for delivering their messages to the target audience. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 223) explains that media relations is very important among Public Relations when it comes to Press Agency and Public Information Model. Therefore, Public Relations practitioner as the third-party information endorser for the media is responsible to giving out the information that is credible and valuable to the public (Wilcox, 2005).

Today, the Public Information Model can be found in mostly in government agencies, NGOs, education and health institutions or in some other

businesses. In fact, the concept of this model is to give out the information to the public usually through the media by hoping someone will pay attention to the information. The example can be seen in one of the Malaysian Government's policies, 1 Malaysia Concept. Agenda setting theory explains the powerful influence in the media that able to create public awareness on important issues (Mccombs, 2002). The media cannot tell what the people to think but has the ability to inform the people what to think about (Cohen, 1963). In order word, Public Relations practitioners able to raise the importance of an issue through the repetition of news in the media. Malaysia is a multicultural society of which the population is made up by different types of ethnic groups includes Malays, Chinese, Indian and the Native. In fact, Malaysians are very sensitive to the issue that particular related to ethnicity and races. Thus, national unity has become the top agenda to the public and thus it has become a Public Relations discourse in Malaysia. In that case, PR practitioner has utilised the mainstream media to disseminate the messages and information that is associates to unity to the Malaysian citizen. Everyday Malaysian citizen and also foreigner have been bombarded by with the messages of 1 Malaysian Concept by the mainstream media. The 1 Malaysia logo and slogan is ubiquitous due to mass advertising and commercials in mainstream media (Hashim, 2011). Therefore, by observing at the very general perspective, the Public Information Model has been practiced in 1 Malaysia concept is to create the awareness on the importance of unity in the society.

The Public Information Model has also been applied in the public service announcements that related to health, safety and environment. One of the

examples is the Tak Nak!, an anti-smoking campaign conducted by Malaysia Ministry of Health. The purpose of this is campaign to create awareness of the dangerous and harmful effect of smoking to the public. The campaign usually associates smoking to deadly diseases such as lung cancer and heart attack. The Tak Nak! Campaign is considered as a Public Information Model because it basically provides the information about the chemical substances that can be found in the cigarettes and how it is harmful to the individuals or the people around them. In fact, Public Information Model also been practiced in some campaign like HIV prevention, Crime Awareness, or any social issues that basically aimed to educate the public. In brief, these campaigns are characterised as a one way communication, in which the PR practitioner only involves in creating awareness and telling the information to the public.

Similarly, Public Information Model also being used for crisis management. The outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Southern China in November 2002 has been recognised as one of the global threats in 21th century. SARS had eventually caused hundreds of death and also bring a worldwide impact on economic and the travel industry. However, Public Information Model has been practiced by the Singapore Government and media to overcome the crisis. Information regarding the SARS outbreak was widely distributed by the media and government. The information such as the SARS knowledge, symptoms, prevention and safety precaution has been distributed to the public. The Singapore Ministry of Health has established the channels that provide sufficient and comprehensive information to the public. All types of media were used, including a public television channel,

radio, newspaper and internet to ensure constant information update and keep the public informed of the risks for infection and preventive measures. In fact, Singapore was taken out of the official list of SARS-infected countries by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2003 due to the quick responses of Singapore Government and their media in controlling the crisis. Therefore, the above example has highlighted the importance of the Public Information Model for PR practitioners when handling the crisis management.

Meanwhile, the higher education institutions have also been spotted on practicing the Public Information Model. We often can see the university and college create the publicity materials such as press release, banner, brochure, flyer or even static web content. In fact, the process usually involved is disseminating the details and information about the history, achievement, facilities, event, faculty and courses. In this context, we have selected Tunku Abdul Rahman College as one of the examples to analyse. We can see Tunku Abdul Rahman College webpage has become the channel of distributing the important information that is related to the academic, facilities, student loan, collaborative university partnership and any upcoming event in the college. In addition to this, the practice of Public Information Model can be highlighted when Tunku Abdul Rahman College provide the information through the distribution of the brochures. The brochures usually consists the information of the courses and overseas university collaborative partnership. Therefore, the process involves the dissemination the information by putting in the college ideas or approaches and uses it to influences their target public.

In recent years, private sector has started to realised the importance of providing and explaining the company policies to their stakeholder. Public Information Model plays an important role when comes to new innovation that needs to explains to the public. The diffusion of innovation theory explains the adoption of the idea, practice, culture or object that is perceived to be new in the society (Rogers, 1962). The theory explains that media as well as interpersonal communication play the important role in providing the information to influence others opinion. Similarly,