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The practices of market-oriented relations in Hong Kong in the digital era

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Abstract

In the digital era, both public relations and marketing studies have examined the significance of interactivity to public relations practices (e.g., Guillory & Sundar, 2014; Song & Zinkhan, 2008; Yadav & Pavlou, 2014). Researchers have repeatedly called for a reassessment of the roles and functions of communication in the public relations and marketing sectors. In particular, trust and commitment are two of the relationship outcomes which have been widely discussed in both public relations and marketing fields (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Jo & Kim, 2003; Sweetser, 2010). Prior research has identified the contributions of public relations and marketing practitioners in relationship management, in particular in managing the relationships between an organization and its customers or consumers (Huang & Hagan, 2011). Hence, this study attempts to revisit the relationship between public relations and marketing in the digital era by investigating the importance of interactivity and the

relationship outcomes as perceived by practitioners managing public relations activities in their organizations. An online survey study on practitioners (N=241) who have engaged in coordinating public relations activities in Hong Kong was conducted from July to November 2017. Factor analyses were conducted to examine the underlying factors of relationship outcomes as perceived by practitioners in the public relations and marketing sectors. Multivariate analyses were also performed to investigate the influence of the degree of practitioners' market orientation on their perceptions of the importance of interactivity and the relationship outcomes of trust and commitment. The results show that customers or consumers are a significant group of stakeholders for practitioners who have involved in organizing public relations activities in Hong Kong. The results serve as a useful point of reference for practitioners to manage the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders in the digital era. The theoretical and practical implications of the study will also be discussed.

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