Journalism & PR

Unpacking ‘Spin’, Stereotypes, & Media Myths

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The interrelationship between journalism and public relations (PR) is one of the most contentious in the field of media studies. Numerous studies have shown that 50–80 per cent of the content of mass media is significantly shaped by PR. But many editors, journalists, and PR practitioners engage in a ‘discourse of denial’, maintaining what critics call the dirty secret of journalism—and PR. Media practitioners also engage in an accusatory ‘discourse of spin’ and a ‘discourse of victimhood’. On the other hand, PR practitioners say they help provide a voice for organizations, including those ignored by the media. Meanwhile, the growth of social media is providing new opportunities for governments, corporations, and organizations to create content and even their own media, increasing the channels and reach of PR.

This book reviews 100 years of research into the interrelationship between journalism and PR and, based on in-depth interviews with senior editors, journalists, and PR practitioners in several countries, presents new insights into the methods and extent of PR influence, its implications, and the need for transparency and change, making it a must-read for researchers and students in media studies, journalism, public relations, politics, sociology, and cultural studies.

“Jim Macnamara sets the stage for a long-needed dialogue between journalism and public relations, defining their respective roles and the relationship between the two fields. The evidence of their interdependence is abundant, and this dialogue is essential in today’s crowded communication landscape. Both journalism and PR have fringe operators and high-minded operators...significant codes of practice grounded in transparency must become paramount in both journalism and PR. The scholarly background needed to advance professional excellence is detailed in this book.” —MAX MCCOMBS, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

“A sharp and astringent account of the love that dares not speak its name—PR and journalism. Jim Macnamara’s book challenges stereotypes and makes a compelling case for the positive role PR can play in our democracy and our media, while at the same time cautioning about some PR practices and calling for improved standards and transparency in both journalism and PR.” —CATHARINE LUMBY, MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

Jim Macnamara (Ph.D., University of Western Sydney) is Professor of Public Communication at the University of Technology Sydney, a position he took up in 2007 after a 30-year professional career spanning journalism, public relations, and media research. He is author of 12 books including The 21st Century Media (R)evolution: Emergent Communication Practices (Peter Lang, 2014) and Public Relations Theories, Practices, Critiques (2012).
Acknowledgements
Foreword


However, in addition to merely reflecting the interests of the media and the people, there is also a growing pressure on the media to provide a platform for political economy narratives. The media, therefore, play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing political discourse. This is particularly evident in the case of the media's role in promoting and legitimizing economic policies, which often have significant social and political implications.

The media's influence over public opinion is often portrayed as a powerful tool that can be used to shape political outcomes. This is especially true in cases where the media has a large audience and a significant amount of control over the information that is disseminated to the public. However, the role of the media in shaping public opinion is not always straightforward, as it can also be influenced by external factors such as government policies and corporate interests.

One of the key challenges facing the media is the need to maintain a balance between providing accurate and unbiased information and maintaining a level of neutrality that is acceptable to all political and economic interests. This is particularly difficult in cases where the media is subject to government control or is owned by large corporations that have their own interests at stake.

In conclusion, the media's role in shaping public opinion is complex and multifaceted. While it can be a powerful tool for promoting positive social and economic outcomes, it can also be a source of conflict and discord. It is therefore crucial for media professionals to be aware of the potential for bias and to strive to provide accurate and balanced information that can help to inform and engage the public in meaningful political discourse.
FORWARD

Journalism and PR share their history in shaping public opinion. In the past, both fields have been crucial in disseminating information and fostering public understanding. With the rise of digital media, the role of PR and journalism has evolved significantly. In this age of instant, pervasive, and increasingly critical media coverage, the importance of PR and journalism in society continues to grow.

PR and journalism have a unique relationship. PR professionals work to create and manage the narrative that surrounds an organization or individual, while journalists are responsible for uncovering and reporting on these narratives. This dynamic relationship has become more complex due to the rapid pace of today’s news cycle and the rise of social media.

In an age of information overload, PR practitioners must work diligently to ensure that their clients’ messages are heard amidst the noise. Similarly, journalists must navigate the clutter of information to bring meaningful stories to the public. This requires not only a deep understanding of the subject matter but also a keen sense of storytelling.

As PR and journalism continue to evolve, it is essential to remember the importance of ethical practices. Transparency, honesty, and accountability are crucial in both fields. By maintaining these values, PR and journalism can continue to fulfill their vital roles in society.

In conclusion, the synergy between PR and journalism is stronger than ever. As we move forward, it is important to recognize and appreciate the contributions of both fields in shaping our world. Through collaboration and mutual respect, PR and journalism can work together to create a more informed and engaged public.
JOURNALISM AND UNPACKING SPIN, SLOGANS, STEREOTYPES, AND MEDIA MIGHTS

FOREWORD

I. Some fundamental principles and prophecies of journalism and media studies

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