

English Abstracts

Olaf Hoffjann: Public Relations as Difference Management of External Governance and Business Self-Governance (Public Relations als Differenzmanagement von externer Kontextsteuerung und unternehmerischer Selbststeuerung), pp. 299-315

PR's roots as research subject in communication studies lie within its recognition as a source of journalism, or as one out of several elements forming public communication. This may explain why PR is still reduced to its role as an external communicator of organizations. The vast majority of research lacks works engaging with PR beyond its role as a facilitator of communication. As a result, theoretic considerations likewise seem far from comprehensive. In particular, aspects concerning the self-presentation (or agenda setting ability) of PR are often overrated, while questions regarding its reflexive capacity as well as its influence within institutions are largely neglected. In this article, I will suggest – on a system-theoretical basis – to regard business self-governance, i.e. the influence on the company's policies, as equivalent to external self-governance, i.e. the self-presentation capacity of PR. Furthermore, I will suggest understanding PR as difference management of external governance and business self-governance; while the context governance will always be the preferred aspect.

Keywords: Public Relations, system theory, governance theory, management

Anna Maria Theis-Berglmair: News Selection Processes and Audience Feedback. A contingency approach-based analysis of editorial decisions (Nachrichtenselektion und Leserfeedback. Ein kontingenzorientierter Ansatz zur Analyse von redaktionellen Entscheidungen), pp. 316-335

Most communication scholars focus on notions of 'news values' and 'decision routines' when examining processes of editorial news selection; while, a definition of the term 'decision' often remains disregarded. Opposed to these traditional approaches, this article follows Niklas Luhmann's idea of decisions as communicative acts and constitutive elements of organizations. Thus, the contingent and paradox nature of decisions comes into play which any editorial office is having to deal with; not only internally but also with respect to the organization's social responsibility. However, a contingency approach-based analysis sheds new light on readers' feedback, as well as on editorial weblogs. This is demonstrated through an empirical analysis of 'blog.tagesschau.de'. Some of the weblog stories appear as a form of public relations in the light of public decisions. These stories could be considered as the 'communicative wrapping' of the unresolved paradox underlying decision processes. This editorial weblog, therefore, does not only reveal the contingency of decisions, but can also be interpreted as a step away from a purely self-referential organization towards a more self-reflexive development.

Keywords: News selection, editorial departments, contingency of decisions, letters to the editor, editor's weblogs, public relations, organizational communication, news values

Teresa Naab / Arne Beekmann / Christoph Klimmt: Corporate Weblogs' Credibility in the Eyes of the Blogger Community (Die Glaubwürdigkeit von Corporate Weblogs aus der Sicht der Blogger-Community), pp. 336-353

Weblogs are frequently assumed to be particularly 'authentic' and regarded a highly credible mode of communication. Since credibility is essential to the success of public relations measures, many companies attempt to benefit from this by establishing so-called Corporate Blogs. Drawing on findings from a survey, this article examines whether the blogger community perceives differences between the credibility of corporate and private weblogs. Following Nawratil (1999), six diverse dimensions of credibility both for private and corporate blogs have been implemented. The results suggest that bloggers regard corporate blogs as less credible than non-commercial blogs. Even more so, active bloggers turned out to be slightly more critical towards corporate blogs than those audience members who only read other's blogs. The article discusses the implications of this for online PR and further research on weblogs.

Keywords: Weblogs, Corporate Blog, Public Relations, Credibility

Birgit Stark / Matthias Karmasin: Austria in the Era of the Internet – still a Country of Newspapers? An Empirical Analysis of the Relationship between Print and Digital News (Österreich – Land der Zeitungleser auch im Zeitalter des Internets? Eine empirische Analyse zum Verhältnis von Print und Online), pp. 353-374

In scholarly works examining the effects of the Internet, the increasing consumption of news and information (online?) is a major area of concern. However, the most fascinating question arising from the emergence of online news is whether and how online news may replace offline news. So far, the changes in Austria's media landscape have not been examined from a user perspective. This paper is filling the gap by drawing on a temporal longitudinal study of 'Media Analyse' data (an Austrian company monitoring the development of the media) from 1996 to 2007, as well as a cross-sectional survey of functions and images of the media. Through examining this diverse material, the changes in the consumption of news content both online and offline are explored. The results indicate a continuing, albeit small, decline of offline audiences among different demographic groups. From a long term perspective, temporal and functional replacements increase while audiences are increasingly prepared to abandon the newspaper.

Keywords: Print newspapers, media use, online newspapers, media competition, functional substitute, Austria