

15.6: The Advantages and Disadvantages of Public Relations

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to

- Discuss the advantages of public relations.
- Discuss the disadvantages of public relations.

Advantages of Public Relations

From a business perspective, the greatest advantage to public relations is cost; public relations is not a paid form of promotion. However, other advantages accompany a well-thought-out public relations strategy.

Increasing Brand Credibility

Because public relations are unpaid and come from an objective source—news media—they are perceived as much more credible than paid advertising. In fact, it is the most credible and persuasive form of promotion. Most consumers value the opinions of news media and opinion leaders over that of a company's best advertising.

Increasing Sales and Leads

Another advantage of public relations is that of sales and leads. Again, because public relations is considered a more credible source of information, various public relations tools can help increase sales and leads for the organization. Imagine you are attending an event raising money for the local animal shelter because you are a huge animal advocate. You see signs that an organization unfamiliar to you is the lead sponsor. While you may never have heard of this organization, let alone considered buying from this company in the past, the fact that it is helping raise money for the local animal shelter sways your decision to do business with them. For example, let's look at Campfire Treats, which makes dog treats. This company was one of the first in its industry to embrace the Better Chicken Commitment (BCC) to ensure better treatment of chickens (Hardt, 2021). The company has gained industry publicity and is becoming popular with pet owners who embrace more humane animal treatment (Pets+, 2021).

Link to Learning: Pet Food Industry.com

Check out this [Pet Food Industry.com article](#) to learn more about Campfire Treats and its commitment to BCC. If you're interested in learning more about the product, check out this video review from Top Dog Tips or this [article from Groovy Goldendoodles](#).



Positive Brand Image

Because consumers are more likely to patronize organizations whose values align with their own, public relations has the distinct opportunity to provide a positive brand image to audiences. When organizations are authentic in their values, it increases loyalty and brand equity.

Cost-Effectiveness

As you've already learned, public relations is not a paid tool in the promotion mix. Several media outlets can pick up a good brand or company story, exposing the promotion to a large audience. Considered the Ice Bucket Challenge that went viral in 2015. Pat Quinn and Pete Frates first promoted the challenge as a way for the public to better understand how Lou Gehrig's disease, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), affects those with the disease. The challenge raised over \$115 million worldwide for the disease and was an extremely cost-effective and fun way to raise funds when it went viral on social media (The ALS Association, 2019).

Disadvantages of Public Relations

While public relations is a cost-effective way to reach a large audience, it does come with its own set of challenges, including no direct control, lack of guaranteed results, and difficulty in evaluating effectiveness.

No Direct Control

Unlike other tools in the promotion mix, marketers have no direct control over public relations. In other words, the media controls how the organization is portrayed, when—or if—the coverage will appear, and where it will be placed. This is why press relations is such an integral part of the public relations strategy (TLE: The Lonely Entrepreneur, 2017).

Lack of Guaranteed Results

Proficient marketers will spend time crafting the perfect press release, curating photographs, and getting just the right message to the media. They can even have excellent relationships with media personnel, but it is ultimately the decision of the media if it will publish a story. A story buried deep in a newspaper's pages or a blur during a news program may not create the results marketers intended.

Difficulty of Evaluating Effectiveness

Public relations activities can be difficult to measure. A marketer can observe media mentions and stories, but their impact on the audience can be difficult to determine. Other tools in the promotion mix can be targeted to the audience of interest, but public relations is not. As such, marketers should consider paying keen attention to areas such as website traffic and social media mentions or shares to determine who sees the press and what they say about it.

Knowledge Check

It's time to check your knowledge on the concepts presented in this section. Refer to the Answer Key at the end of the book for feedback.

1.

After watching a TikTok, you learn that Thinx—a company that produces period underwear—has donated over \$25,000 in period and other products to Afghan women who have recently fled their country. Because of this, you decide to purchase Thinx products. Which advantage of public relations has been achieved in this scenario?

- a. Increased sales and leads
- b. Lack of direct control
- c. Guaranteed results
- d. Direct control

2.

Public relations has all the following advantages except _____.

- a. increased brand credibility
- b. increased brand image
- c. direct control

d. increased sales and leads

3.

When Story Land, a children's museum in New Hampshire, reopened, it utilized public relations. Numerous local television stations picked up and reported the story, providing free marketing to potential customers. The company bet on the positive virality of its press release, which worked in its favor. Which disadvantages explain why Story Land "bet on the positive virality"?

- a. No direct control
- b. Increased brand recognition
- c. Increased sales
- d. Guarantee of results

4.

Which of the following is a true statement concerning public relations?

- a. Public relations is more expensive than advertising.
- b. Public relations has more of a guarantee of positive results than other forms of promotion.
- c. Public relations has the most message control of the various forms of promotion.
- d. Public relations is free but has no guarantee of results.

5.

When Taco Bell was hit with a lawsuit claiming its seasoned beef was only 35% beef, the company used social media to show its ingredients, a wildly successful campaign. Which of the following was Taco Bell hoping for?

- a. Guaranteed results
- b. Improved brand image
- c. Direct control of the message
- d. Increase sales and leads

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