

A normative reflection on public relations and or corporate communications practice

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Abstract

There has been debate among scholars, students and practitioners and in the field of communication management regarding the correct name to describe the practice of public relations and corporate communications. One of the arguments that has stuck is the debate whether these two terminologies may refer to the same practice or are distinct disciplines. Some scholars and practitioners may dismiss such limited focus on nomenclature. On the surface this may appear trivial, but it underscores different theoretical and practical perspectives brought into the field. Such disagreements, while expected in a young field such as this, are not healthy for a discipline at its infancy, fighting for acceptance and respectability in academic and industrial circles. But then, the begging question is if practitioners and academicians seem not to be in agreement whether public relations and corporate communications are one and the same, what about the students and the industry? While there have been views from an American and European perspective leading towards a normative perspective, a consensus on how to describe the discipline has not been arrived at. This paper will attempt to identify, define, describe and interrogate the perspectives that embody the two labels and ultimately state whether the two disciplines are synonymous, through the application of a normative interpretive framework derived from the review of literature.

Background

There has been debate among practitioners and scholars in the field of communications regarding the practice of public relations and corporate communications. The thrust of the argument is whether these two terminologies refer to the same practice and discipline or are distinct.

The attempt to disambiguate these two terms may appear trivial, but it underscores different fundamental theoretical and practical perspectives brought into the field. The begging question is if practitioners and academicians seem to be in agreement whether public relations and corporate communications are one and the same, what about the students and the industry?

This paper will attempt to give a review on how various scholars have approached the distinction on corporate communication and public relations. The objective will be to establish the extent to which they disambiguate the two disciplines, and whether this leads to consensus or further debate, towards developing a more global language and description of

the discipline and profession. This approach will be in line with Ruler and Vercic (2009) who feel that the multiplicity and sometimes confusing terminologies are part of the development of a young field and urge for the debate to focus on central concepts, characteristics and parameters of the field.

This paper borrows heavily from the approach by Hubner (2007) who has documented the debates between the two disciplines from an American and European scholarship. In his view the American scholarship is advanced by both public relations and corporate communications approaches.

The public relations approach is represented by Grunig and Hunt (1984); Grunig and Dozier (1992); Hunt and Grunig (1994); Dozier and Grunig et al. (1995); Grunig and Grunig et al. (2002) and Wilcox and Cameron (2009) among others. On the other hand, the corporate communication approach is hinged on a management perspective, where communication is seen as a functional area of management and espoused by Argenti (2009) among others.

On the other hand, European scholarship is espoused by Van Riel (1992), Bruhn (2003) and Cornelissen (2004) strategic management perspective on corporate communication. The European Scholarly approach is largely espoused by a corporate communication approach. However, it should be noted that we have scholars such as Gregory (2010) advancing the public relations approach from the European dimension.

Despite those two different orientations it is important that the terminologies are unpacked to identify what underlying points of departure exist.

The above overview sets the context under which this paper reflects on the debate on public relations and corporate communication with a view to establishing whether the debates are useful in disambiguating and providing a consensus towards the relationship of the two terminologies. This paper will avoid reflecting on definitions as much as possible and instead focus on concepts and other aspects of argument.

The literature may be broadly discussed on a historical, managerial and regional perspective. However, this paper will attempt to classify the debate into more subgroups that could easily be subsumed within the three broad interrelated categories.

A historical reflection

The historical development has been provided from a corporate communication and public relations perspective. The two approaches seem to have consensus in the period before 1990, where the discipline was singularly public relations; but differ on their rendition on what happens next.

From the corporate communication reflection, there are about four phases representing the different historical periods that have been identified by Cornelissen (2004). These range from press agency (1800-1899), public information (1800-1899), one-way asymmetry and two-way symmetry (1940 to 1990) and now the present period of corporate communications that is research and management driven (1990 to date). He puts his thoughts into perspective by describing the situation:

“Communication management has developed in line with other developments in the society...disentangling the historical forces that have informed and shaped contemporary communication practice is therefore considered here as a crucial first step towards contextualizing, understanding and framing corporate communications... (p.33).”

An additional perspective is provided by Argenti (2009), a corporate communication advocate, who provides the business context that has necessitated the replacement of public relations with corporate communications. To him, the initial focus of public relations was “spinning” and had a journalistic approach that could not meet the changing business environment and diverse stakeholders.

We must be wary that the foregoing historical description has been crafted from a corporate communication perspective and seems to suggest that public relations had become obsolete and was not relevant beyond the 1990s. However, not all scholars agree with the assertion that corporate communication has replaced public relations entirely.

The public relations reflection by scholars such as Grunig (2002) and Wilcox and Cameron (2009), argue that the period beyond 1990 focuses on research, planning, execution and evaluation of public relations programmes (management), and relationship building activities. It is during this period that public relations scholars introduce the term “communication management” as a suffix to public relations, perhaps to underscore the centrality of management in the discipline.

As seen from the above, it is clear that challenges and debates on public relations and corporate communication emerged from the post 1990 period. Scholars, from the corporate communication orientation conclude that practice of public relations was replaced by corporate communication from the 1990s.

On the other hand, scholars from the public relations orientation indicate that the post 1990s public relations approach infused a management approach. Interestingly, the public relations scholars do not make reference to corporate communication at all in their contributions; while the corporate communication scholars only make reference to public relations when referring to the historical development of the discipline.

A management school reflection

The management school of thought emerged from the 1990s, among some scholars who felt that a combination of both management and communication theories led to growth, development and relevance of the field. This is a perspective shared by scholars from both corporate communication and public relations orientations. However, this is a view strongly held by proponents of corporate communications who feel that public relations is not “managerial enough”, an erroneous conclusion as will be underscored throughout this paper (Argenti, 2009; Van Riel and Fombrun 2007; Cornelissen, 2004).

Cornelissen (2004; 2017) appreciates that this is a multidisciplinary field with different theoretical disciplines which help strengthen the discipline saying, “Rather than accepting one traditional or arguing over one approach to the other, the different theoretic perspectives

enrich our overall knowledge of Corporate Communication (pg. 18).” He argues that the strategic management strand and theoretical grounding would have greater benefit to the practitioners and their professional development than mere focus on the purity of the discipline of communication, devoid of pollination from other fields; an argument that this paper agree with.

Corporate communication proponents see the field of corporate communication as better placed in schools of business and management rather than schools of communication (Argenti, 1996). This argument is captured by Argenti (1996) who had this to say:

“Business schools are the most appropriate homes for the discipline, because like other functional areas within the corporation (such as marketing, finance, production and human resource management), corporate communication exists as a real and important part of most organizations. As such it should rightfully be housed in that branch of the academy that deals with business administration or graduate schools of business. (pg. 74).”

Whether placing the discipline of corporate communication within the management and business schools in universities would support the growth of the discipline is something that is debatable and I would not want to focus on that debate in this paper.

Public relations perspectives are best summarised by Grunig’s from this earlier theory of the publics to the excellence theory of public relations, his latest (Hubner (2007)). This group of scholars retain the “label” public relations despite advancing public relations as a management field.

Lattimore, Baskin, Heimen and Toth (2012) and Grunig (2006), argues that public relations is a strategic management function that goes beyond publicity, media relations and messaging. Grunig (2006) goes further and concludes that all public relations theories crystallize at the excellence theory which attempts to institutionalize public relations as a management function, practice and research in organizations so that it is accepted.

An actual reading of the excellence theory will reveal that public relations proponent through the excellence studies that begun in 1983 had long reflected on the discipline as a management function long before the corporate communication proponents had emerged.

Interestingly, a position that this paper does not support, Lattimore, Baskin, Heimen and Toth (2012); view public relations as much broader discipline, with corporate communication as a sub discipline which they call corporate public relations used in business organizations.

They reckon that public relations practitioners have five key responsibilities among them corporate communication and reputation, crisis management, executive communications, employee communications and; marketing and product public relations. The scholars decry the creation of new titles to describe the discipline such as public affairs, issues management, corporate communication, or external relations.

An emerging trend among scholars from a public relations orientation is looking beyond the business interests of an organization. Lattimore et al (2007) feel that there has been too much study and focus of public relations from a business and organization standpoint, rather than

from a critical approach to public relations which critiques the misuse of power and other suppressive practices by organizations.

This appears to be contradictory since public relations departments and consultants serve the interests of an organization. Which makes us pose the question whether one can be termed a public relations practitioner without meeting the business interests of the organization.

Generally speaking, at some point, Grunig and other public relations proponents stop using the term “public relations” alone, and instead combine it with “communication management”. So we now talk of “public relations and communication management”. It is clear that though Grunig and others look at public relations from the management perspective, they do not subscribe to the label “corporate communication.”

The use of the “management” suffix after “communication” is to perhaps emphasize that public relations was cognizant of the management demands in the discipline and in a subtle way, was getting back to the corporate communication proponents and other emerging specializations.

From the above discussion, it would be misleading to suggest that corporate communication is more managerial than public relations. Both approaches are informed by a management approach and this parameter alone may not form a basis to differentiate them.

Reflection on integration of different organisational communication practices

Scholars and practitioners have for long called for a unified approach towards communication management, so that all communication activities are planned for and executed under one function. This approach is supported by corporate communication proponents and may easily be discussed under the management perspective.

Some scholars feel that corporate communication is the best terminology that describes all forms of communication activities done by an organization. Cornelissen (2004) is of the view that corporate communication is an integration of diverse backgrounds saying, “Different theoretical perspectives from communications and management theory have been brought to bear upon the field of corporate communications through reflections and research (pg. 9).”

In his view, all communication specializations taking place within an organization such as advertising, media relations, lobbying, public affairs, branding, direct marketing and corporate design have been encapsulated under the banner of corporate communication. He further advocates for the merger of marketing and public relations, through the corporate communication umbrella.

This is apposition shared by Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) who suggests that management communication, organizational communication, and marketing communication merge into corporate communication. The two scholars argue that “corporate” is derived from a Latin word “corpus” meaning body or whole. Thus, corporate communication encompasses the entire communication by an organization.

The implementation of this is tricky. Cornelissen (2004) bears this in mind by suggesting a combined theoretical approach of using management and communication theories but fails to convincingly demonstrate how the entire marketing function and communications would coexist, given their different theoretical and ethical orientations.

Cornelissen's model gives various scenarios of coexistence of marketing and communication. First is as an equal mix of marketing and communication, a dominant marketing approach and communication, a dominant communication approach and marketing, and a purely marketing or communication approach. This argument looks attractive from a practice perspective but it is not clear how the marketing theoretical orientation will reconcile with that of public relations.

Scholars with persuasion from a public relations perspective also see the integration in current practice of public relations. A reading on the thoughts of scholars such as Grunig in various publications and Wilcox and Cameron (2009), demonstrates that there are various specializations similar to the different disciplines stated by the corporate communication proponents; that are also housed under public relations.

For instance, Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) in their "excellence study" sought to establish how, why, and to what extent communication affects the achievement of organizational objectives. These questions emerged way back in 1984, before the emergence of corporate communication as a distinct discipline.

One of their main findings from the firms researched was that the communication function was integrated in manner that all activities were encapsulated within the public relations department by a senior executive with background in public relations.

They observed that integrated marketing communication was integrated in to an integrated public relations function, and not public relations that was integrated into a marketing function. This assertion appears to be different from that of Cornelissen (2004) who gave four possibilities of integration.

We show that excellent communication functions are integrated. However, they are not integrated through another management function, such as marketing or human resources. They are integrated through a senior communication executive-who usually has a background in public relations-or through a single public relations department.

We found that integrated marketing as a background in public relations-or through a single public relations department. They are not integrated through another management function, such as marketing or human resources. They are integrated through a senior communication executive-who usually has a background in public relations-or through a single public relations department.

We found that integrated marketing communication (IMC) is integrated into the integrated public relations function. IMC should not be the concept that integrates communication (p. xi).

Therefore, from a practical and scholarly point of view, both disciplines of public relations and corporate communications in their broadest sense encompass all communication efforts undertaken by an organization.

An ethical reflection

Scholars from the corporate communication orientation feel that the practice of public relations is looked down by the industry and practitioners, due to its unethical conduct. This negative connotation is based from the earlier practice of public relations that heavily relied on propaganda and misrepresentation of facts. Public relations had been associated with derogatory terms such as “parrot”, “spin”, “doctors”, “liars”. Therefore, the desire to replace “public relations” with “corporate communication”. This is how Cornelissen (2004) captures these thoughts:

“Clamour of arguments in favour of corporate communications view of an organization’s communication practices increased rather than diminished with time. Deeply connected with structural changes in practice and the allied professions of marketing and public relations and the need for a makeover term for ‘Public Relations’ or public relations departments for their “negative spin” connotations (pg. 1).”

In a very subjective way, similar thoughts on public relations seem to be at play today where people mistake lies, propaganda and any dishonest communication as public relations. While this line of argument is partly true, scholars from a public relations orientation argue that the practice is more managerial and ethical to address the changing environment (Grunig, Grunig and Dozier ,2002).

Reflection on debate between relationships and communication

Ruler and Vervic (2009) revisit the debate on relationships and communication by suggesting that relationships are central in a public relations approach, but not in corporate communications.

This distinction is problematic. Perhaps the starting point will be to unpack the meaning of the words associated with two disciplines. That is “public” and “relations” on hand; and “corporate” and “communications” on the other hand.

The starting point is to assume that public implies the various publics which an organization relates (relations) to. Two questions arise from this terminology. Who relates with the public? How are these relations developed and maintained? An attempt to answer the two questions suggests that corporates (read corporate) relate with the public and these relations (read communications) are developed and maintained through communication.

The foregoing raises a fundamental question on what really constitutes communication, and whether it’s true that public relations is solely about relationship and that communication has nothing to do with relationships. Another question that comes to mind is if relationships can be constituted without communication. Incidentally, the authors found that even in Europe,

researchers are finding it difficult to distinguish between communication and relationships. What one may consider relationships is taken to be communication by another.

The position of this paper is that both public relations and corporate communication place relationships at the top of their priority. Both focus on a stronger bond (relationships) with their audiences, referred to as “publics” in public relations and “stakeholders” in corporate communication. Thus the question raised here is more of semantic in nature but not on fundamental differences between the two disciplines.

A Geographic and regional reflection

Scholars from different regions subscribe to different labels, practices and approaches to public relations and corporate communications. These regions could be divided into American, European, African, Asian and many other possible categories. Scholars such as Krishnamurthy and Dejan (2009) and Ruler and Vercic (2009) have edited handbooks capturing regional approaches and practices to the discipline of communication management.

An American and European reflection

The American and European perspectives have dominated the scholarly debates as mentioned earlier in the background. This debate has crystallized with American scholars taking a predominant public relations orientation, while the European scholars predominantly corporate communication (Hubner, 2007).

As mentioned earlier and summarised by Hubner (2007), from an American perspective, the public relations approach is represented by Grunig and Hunts (1984); Grunig and Dozier (1992); Hunt and Grunig (1994); Dozier and Grunig et al. (1995); Grunig and Grunig et al. (2002) and Wilcox and Cameron (2009) among others. The corporate communication approach is espoused by Argenti (2009). On the other hand, European scholarship is espoused by Van Riel (1992), Bruhn (2003) and Cornelissen (2004, 2017). While corporate communication “label” is dominated by scholars in the United Kingdom, Europe and other areas, this does not mean that public relations orientation is not strong in Europe. Scholars such as Anne Gregory have done some writing on public relations and served in public relations organizations. We also have bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) with a strong presence in the United Kingdom and widely accepted in Africa.

Further still, Ruler and Vercic (2009) carried out a study on public relations and communication management in Europe in the “Delphi studies” involving twenty-six European countries and the findings indicated that the term “public relations” is not widely used in Europe; but is instead replaced with communication management, corporate communications and communication science among others.

An African Reflection

Skinner and Mersham (2009) write an article on the nature and status of public relations practice in Africa and acknowledge that practitioners should be informed by the wider socio, economic and political context and focus on solving challenges facing society. In their view, the different level of development in Africa makes African public relations scholars and practitioners uncomfortable with the accepted normative approaches, provided from both an American and European perspective. This paper supports Skinner and Mersham (2009) by arguing that from an African dimension, public reactions should solve current social and political problems facing the society.

The foregoing discussion will be reinforced through getting insights from Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt and Kenya.

A Nigerian Reflection

Koper, Babaleye and Johansoozi (2009) give a historical dimension of the growth of the PR industry in Nigeria and acknowledge the oral communication nature of African communication, and its likely influence in the performance of public relations in Africa.

They also acknowledge the unique contextual situations in which public relations skills and techniques are used in social change such as wars, conflict and government development agenda among others (Skinner & Mersham, 2009).

The Nigerian industry demonstrates that public relations in the African context may not follow the normative structure, and does not appear to delve into the public relations-corporate communication debate.

An Egyptian Reflection

Keenan (2009) provides an Egyptian overview that treats hospitality and customer relations as primary roles of public relations. Universities in Egypt teach public relations as a single unit instead of a degree programme.

Public relations is also confused with advertising and marketing because most organizations consider sales to be the primary goal of public relations and are not interested in the broader programmes of public relations (Zaklana, 2001 cited by Keenan, 2009).

However, a few organizations have specialty areas of public relations such as events management, crisis management, and government relations among others. As observed, the state of the practice and the industry isn't well developed, and may not contribute much to the normative debate.

A South African Reflection

A survey carried out in 2014 by the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management shows the trajectory that public relations in South Africa has taken to date.

“During the period 1957 to 1994 public relations in South Africa evolved and developed and evolved through different phases such as fundraising and publicity, press-agentry, more sophisticated two way relational approaches and, ultimately, into management counsel and advice (pg. 3).”

In addition to that, Resenburg (2009) provides a South African perspective to public relations by suggesting that the field is still characterized by its search for identity, legitimacy and professional recognition and challenges. The scholar challenges South Africa to seek more substantial and theoretical insights, while urging for further research to bring clarity to the practice of public relations which is associated with negative connotations.

“In spite of substantial changes in the focus and operation of Public Relations during the last two decades, the term public relations has been both misused and misunderstood since the early 1950s. It continues to be incorrectly associated with propaganda, press agentry, manipulation and is often confused with advertising, marketing and promotion.

Practitioners are still suspected of disseminating incomplete distorted and biased information and being the faceless image brokers and spin doctors for rich and powerful individuals, politicians, causes and organizations (P. 360).”

The observation by Rosenberg (2009) seems to have spurred the public relations industry in South Africa to greater heights as reflected by the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (2014) survey which observes that the public relations profession in South Africa is considered the most mature in the continent as cited in Roodt (2011) and provides an insight into the growth of the discipline in Africa:

“The field grew steadily during this period as a result of the developments in education and research, and the establishment of a professional body in 1957. During the 1990s the practice was dominated by the Excellence Theories, and this normative approach became entrenched to the extent that it still dominates the practice today.

Recent research conducted by the University of Johannesburg on the philosophy of PR and Communication in SA suggests that South African PR and Communication practitioners are now shifting away from this normative behavioural-managerial approach towards greater reflection, and an ‘other’ orientation in the professional practice.

This ‘other’ orientation manifests itself in a rejection of self-interest, consequence-based decision-making and paternalism as guiding principles for professional practice. There is also a clear shift away from serving the interests of the economically or politically powerful towards an inclusive integrative social role – thus suggesting some inquiry into personal accountability for actions (pg. 3).”

The above observation points out the challenge towards the practice of South Africa to serve the interests of the minority and less powerful in society (Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, 2014; Rosenberg, 2009; Skinner & Mersham 2009; Koper, Babale & Johansoozi, 2009).

Similarly, The Pretoria School of thought, agitated from a combination of both European and American models of public relations, while adhering to wider society benefit through the

“triple P” concept of people, planet and profits (Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, 2014).

Closely related to the focus of this paper, Rosenburg (2009) acknowledges the diversity of titles used to refer to departments dealing with public relations but concludes that the term “public relations” is still the most popular in South Africa.

The author decries cannibalism into the field from other disciplines such as management consultants, advertising agencies, marketing firms who essentially get involved in branding, materials production and carrying out communication audits. Her views are summarized as follows:

“Public relations department in South African Organizations are called by a variety of names such as Corporate Affairs, Public Relations, Development Corporate Communications, Marketing Services and even lately Relationship Management. This is mainly an attempt to capture the essence of what concerns these departments...however, the term Public Relations is still the most acceptable and most often used the term in this country, it encompasses all the communication activities with which organizations are normally involved... (pg. 362).”

This takes us back to normative public-relations corporate communication debate, and demonstrates that this debate is not uniquely American and European, but also African as demonstrated by South Africa.

A Kenyan Reflection

A few studies have been carried out in Kenya in the field of public relations and communication management. For instance, Mbeke (2009) looks at the state of public relations in Kenya guided by two research questions. The first question was on the nature and status of public relations in Kenya and the second was on the environmental factors affecting this practice.

The researcher does not place the practice of public relations in Kenya within any normative framework but reviews the evolution of public relations and appraises the prevailing situation in the country. He traces the use of public relations techniques and tactics used by local Kenyans and by early missionaries in their visit to Kenya. Within this historical rendition, two things emerge.

One is that public relations encompasses all forms of persuasive and interactional communication at a broader societal level. Second, is the oral nature of most of these interactions due to the popularity of oral forms of communication in Africa. At no point does the scholar make any reference to corporate communications. The writer implies that public relations in Kenya transcends the corporate world and is used to refer to communication activities at a broader societal level.

Another Kenyan researcher interested in the historical development of the field is Opuka (2009) who has done a paper on developments and challenges in public relations in Africa. He provides a commentary on the status of education in public relations. He observes that most practitioners have been trained in communications, journalism, mass communication

and other related fields and decries the lack of scholars with PhDs in public relations and limited research in this field in Kenya.

One point that he has raised, though not substantiated, and may be of relevance to this debate is the fact that majority of practitioners in Kenya have a background in journalism and mass communication, and perhaps influencing the model of practice and scholarly work being undertaken in Kenya.

One study that has made close attempts towards placing the Kenyan practice within or relative to the normative framework is one by Kiambi (2010) who explores the public relations models and cultural influences in Kenya. Like Opuka (2009), he also decries the lack of adequate research in public relations in Kenya despite a vibrant public relations sector.

He outlines four factors influencing the practice of public relations including the history of the practice, level of national development, political development and context; and primary clients. He outlines the various models of public relations such as press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, two-way symmetrical, personal influence and the cultural interpreter model.

The personal influence model by Sriramesh (1992) focuses on how practitioners cultivate good relations with key publics. On the other hand, the cultural interpreter model by Lyra (1991) is based on public relations practice in Greece which looks at how organizations operate in another country.

In addition to the models, Kiambi gives a cultural dimension from Hofstede's cultural dimensions. His study is quantitative in nature, which limits his ability to probe the beliefs, experiences and practices within his informants. Moreover, majority of his respondents were mainly drawn from the agencies, and may not have provided the broad and diverse views that reflected the state of the practice in the country.

In his findings he established that the personal influencer model was the most favoured model by public relations practitioners in Kenya, followed by the cultural interpreter model, Grunig's two way symmetrical, press agency, two way asymmetrical and public information model in that order. He attributes the high preference to the personal influence model due to the high premium placed on relationships with key stakeholders.

On the popularity of the cultural interpreter model, he avers that the increasing internationalization and growth in international trade has made a huge contributing factor. He however does not make any remote reference to corporate communications, perhaps given his American orientation to this study in that he was pursuing his master's degree from an American university.

From the foregoing, it is evident that most research in Kenya has taken the historical development approach (see Mbeke, 2009 and Opuka, 2009). On the other hand, Kiambi (2010) has attempted to profile the practice of public relations in Kenya from cultural normative perspective, and does not delve into adding his voice towards disambiguating the disciplines of public relations and corporate communications; an attempt that this paper intends to make.

Summary

This matter remains contentious with corporate communication being predominant in the United Kingdom and Europe, while Public Relations in the United States. The take of this paper is that the current conceptualization and practice of corporate communications and public relations are broadly similar.

On the other hand, there is an emerging trend from African scholars who see public relations from a broader impact on society, rather than limiting the practice at organizational level. The table below summarizes an interpretive framework that emanated from the view of literature regarding the concepts of public relations and corporate communication.

Table 1: Interpretive framework on public relations – corporate communication discipline and practice

Element	Public Relations approach	Corporate Communication approach	Reflection
Historical development of the discipline	Public relations has matured to a management function	Corporate communication has replaced public relations, as its considered more managerial	It is incorrect to suggest that public relations reached a plateau, and replaced by corporate communication.
Management perspective	Recognizes public relations as a management function and lately suffixes “communication management”	Corporate communication is a strategic management function.	Both approaches are cognizant of managerial aspects. The choice of vocabularies such as stakeholders are borrowed from management theories and are not significantly different from publics.
Integration of different organizational communication practices	Acknowledges the various specializations under public relations	All specializations including marketing subsumed into corporate communications.	Both have different specializations. However, it is difficult to reconcile the marketing and communication theoretical approach in an integrated corporate communication.
Corporate communication	Associated with spinning, and	For the discipline to	No fundamental difference as one is named to appeal to the market

used to sanitize soiled reputation of public relations	distortion of information.	regain credibility, there is need for change of name to corporate communication.	(corporate communications), so as to avoid the negative connotations.
Relationships versus communication	Appreciate the need for mutually beneficial relationships with publics.	Entails communication by the organization to its stakeholders.	The difference between relationships and communication are not fundamental. Terms have only been substituted.
Regional perspectives	An American orientation. Term is also popular in Africa.	Predominantly European orientation.	This is one discipline and practice there is need to reconcile the American and European perspectives. The African concept of public relations takes a critical dimension as there is concern with use of communication to solve Africa's problems. This sounds theoretical as its not been demonstrated in practice.

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