

Measurement of Public Relations Effects

Landmarks in Public Relations Metrics

- 1952: Cutlip & Center discuss the importance of both research and evaluation.
- 1960s: Communication researchers begin to evaluate the effects of communication campaigns.
- 1977: AT&T measurement project culminates in first-ever conference on PR measurement at the University of Maryland.

Landmarks in Public Relations Metrics

- 1990: Broom & Dozier publish *Using Research in Public Relations*. Describes the “scientific management of public relations.”
- 1992: First book from IABC Excellence project published. Explains the value of public relations to an organization.

Landmarks in Public Relations Metrics

- 1996: Summit meeting on PR effectiveness held in New York, sponsored by the U. S. Institute for Public Relations, *Inside PR*, and Ketchum Public Relations.
- 1999: Institute for Public Relations forms Commission on PR Measurement and Evaluation.

Some Initial Caveats

- “Research” is a more appropriate term than “measurement” or “metrics.”
- Research includes conceptualization as well as measurement.
- The lack of conceptualization in public relations is a greater problem than the lack of measurement.

Types of Public Relations Research

- Research **IN** public relations.

Used by practitioners in their work.

- Research **ON** public relations.

Constructive, critical research by academic scholars on the practice of public relations.

- Research **FOR** public relations.

Theoretical research on how to conduct the practice of public relations.

The Nature of Conceptualization

- The process of thinking logically about concepts, definitions, measures, and the relationships among them.
- Research is a problem-solving process.
 - ◆ The presence or absence of a dependent variable defines a problem.
 - ◆ Independent variables affect dependent variables; they can be changed to solve a problem.

Levels of Analysis for Research IN Public Relations

- Planning and evaluation of communication programs.
- Auditing the quality of the public relations function.
- Showing the value of public relations to the organization.
- Auditing the contribution of public relations to society.

Segments of the Public Relations Programming Process

- Formative research to identify publics with whom the organization needs a relationship.
- Process research to monitor communication/relationship cultivation strategies.
- Evaluation research to measure the effects of communication programs and the quality of relationships and organizational reputation.

Research at the Program Level

Individual communication programs such as media relations, community relations, or customer relations are successful when they affect the awareness, cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors of both publics and members of the organization.

Formative Research for Programs

- Observations.
- Advisory groups.
- Interviews.
- Focus groups.
- Questionnaires and survey research.
- Content analysis of media.
- Cyber analysis.
- Naturally occurring information.
- Data bases.

Process Objectives for Evaluation of Programs

- Research for public relations has identified cultivation strategies that improve the quality of relationships with publics.
- Examples are:
 - ◆ Disclosure by publics of concerns.
 - ◆ Complaints or inquiries by publics.
 - ◆ Disclosure by management to publics.

Outcome Objectives for Evaluation of Programs

One-Way

- Communication.
- Message retention.
- Cognition.
- Attitude.
- Behavior.

Two-Way

- Disclosure.
- Accuracy.
- Understanding.
- Agreement.
- Symbiotic behavior.

Research Methods for Evaluation

- Quantitative

- Surveys.

- Experiments.

- Qualitative

- Observations.

- Interviews.

- Focus Groups.

Methods of Limited or No Value

- Media analysis (except for monitoring media relations).
- Advertising equivalencies.
- General surveys of attitudes, images, or reputation.

Research at the Organizational Level

- Over the long-term, successful short-term communication activities and programs contribute to the building of quality, long-term relationships with strategic publics.
- Relationships add value by reducing costs, reducing risks, and increasing revenue.
- The organizational value of public relations can be determined by measuring the type and quality of relationships.

Formative Research at the Organizational Level: Environmental Scanning

- Monitoring of management decisions for implications on stakeholders.
- Segmentation of stakeholders and publics.
- Qualitative observations of activists, advisory groups, contacts.
- Interviews with organizational boundary spanners.
- Cyber scanning.
- Electronic databases.
- Monitoring of media and political processes.

Relationships Can Be Measured to Evaluate Public Relations

The newest trend
in public relations research

Types of Relationships

■ Exchange

One party gives benefits to the other only because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future.

■ Communal

Both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other—even when they get nothing in return.

Relationship Outcomes

■ Trust

One party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party.

■ Control mutuality

The degree to which parties agree on who has rightful power to influence one another.

Relationship Outcomes

■ Commitment

The extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote.

■ Satisfaction

The extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced.

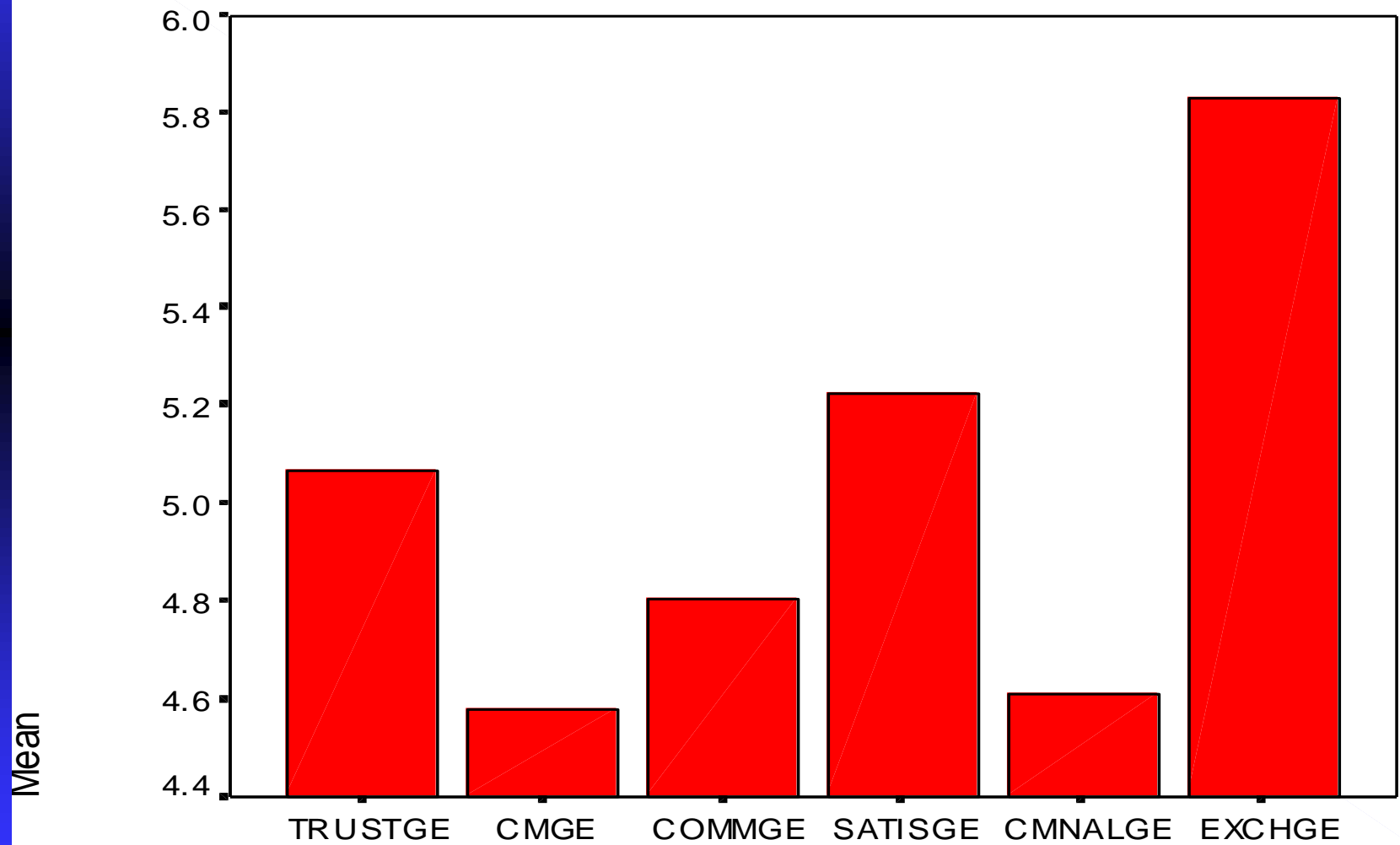
Three Examples of Relationships

- Community relations at a U. S. Department of Energy laboratory.
- Media relations.
- Employee relations.

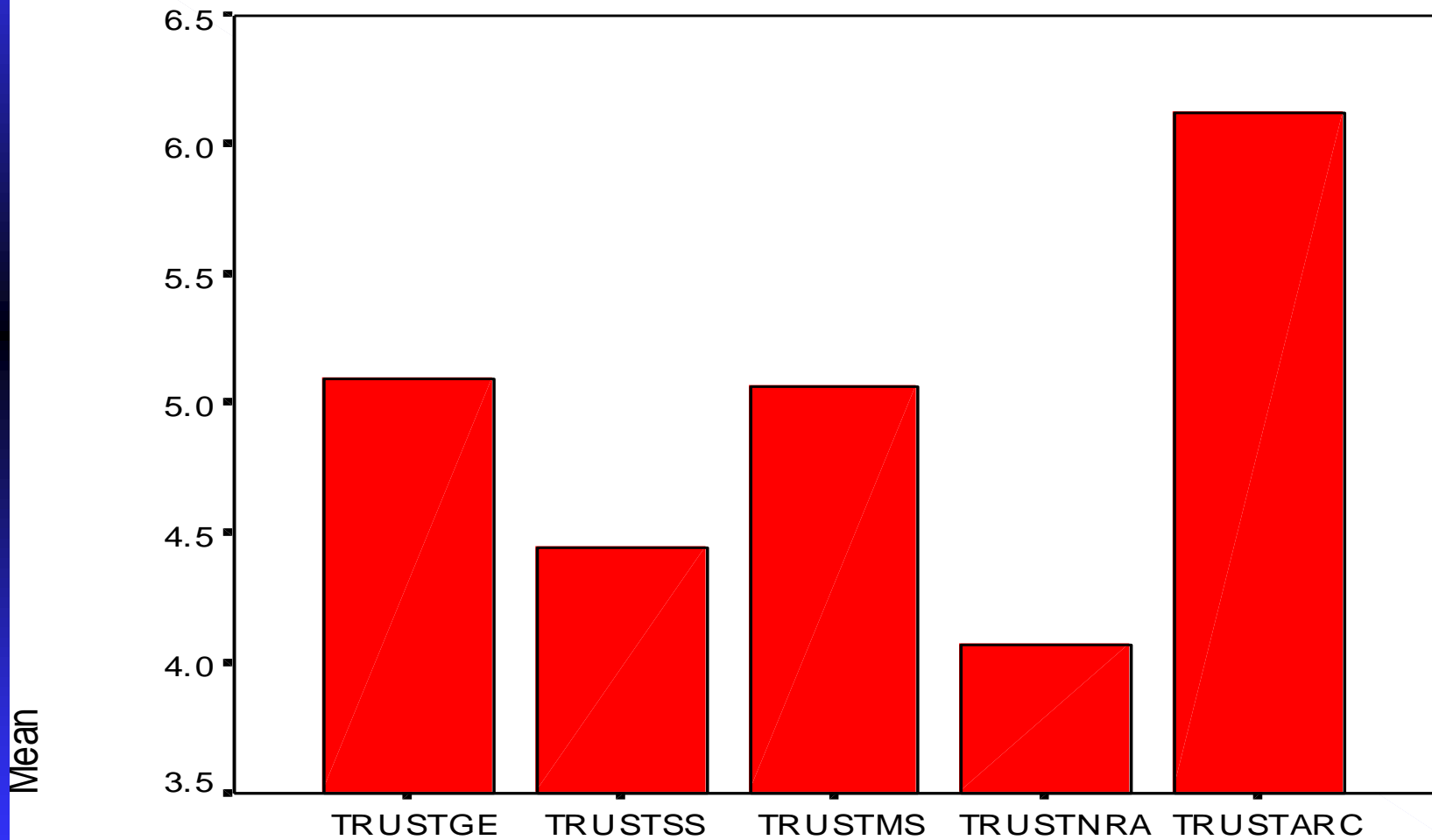
Example: Indicators of Control Mutuality

1. This organization and people like me are attentive to what each other say.
2. This organization believes the opinions of people like me are legitimate.
3. In dealing with people like me, this organization has a tendency to throw its weight around.
(Reversed)
4. This organization really listens to what people like me have to say.
5. The management of this organization gives people like me enough say in the decision-making process.

Indicators for GE



Trust Indicators by Organization



Qualitative Research on Relationships

- Begin with “grand-tour” questions:
 1. “Do you feel that you have a relationship with (organization)(public)? Why or why not?”
 2. “Please describe your relationship with (organization)(public).”
- Analyze using the dimensions of relationship or new characteristics that emerge.
- Probe for dimensions of relationships.

Trust

- Would you describe any things that (organization) (public) has done to treat (organization)(public) fairly and justly, or unfairly and unjustly? (*integrity*)
- Would you describe things that (organization)(public) has done that indicate it can be relied on to keep its promises, or that it does not keep its promises? (*dependability*)
- How confident are you that (organization)(public) has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do? Can you give me examples of why you feel that way? (*competence*)

Relationships and Reputation

- The concept of reputation has value when used in conjunction with relationships.
- Reputation is a byproduct of organizational performance, as evaluated by stakeholders, and of relationships with stakeholders.
- Open-End Questions Measure Reputations Best (“In a sentence or two, please tell me what comes to mind when you think of [organization].”)

Functional Level

The public relations function as a whole can be audited by comparing the structure and processes of the department or departments that implement the function with the best practices of the public relations function in other organizations or with theoretical principles derived from scholarly research. Evaluation at this level can be called theoretical or practical benchmarking.

The IABC Excellence Study Provides A Theoretical Benchmark

Excellent public relations is:

- Managerial.
- Strategic.
- Integrated but not sublimated to other management functions.
- Symmetrical.
- Diverse.
- Ethical.
- Global.

Societal Level

Organizations have an impact beyond their own bottom line. They also affect other individuals, publics, and organizations in society. As a result, the contributions of public relations to society can be audited by observing and measuring the ethics and social responsibility of organizations.

Public Relations and Ethics

- Suggested by research in Slovenia.
- Most research has been on personal ethics.
- A theory of organizational ethics is needed.
- Public relations can serve as the ethics officer of an organization.

Auditing Ethics

- Teleology

What consequences do decisions have on publics?

- Deontology

The moral obligation to communicate with and disclose our behaviors to publics when an organization has consequences on them.