

Book Notes

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- Public opinion and its formation
 - Public opinion is an opinion held by different publics
 - The formation of public opinion is a constantly evolving process and should not be regarded as static by PR professionals
 - The public is often noncommittal about an issue, but once it is motivated to address it, they form attitudes and beliefs and take action to achieve their interests throughout the life cycle of the issue
- Aristotle's ethos, pathos, and logos
 - Ethos: Source credibility
 - Logos: Logical argument
 - Pathos: Emotional appeal
- Opinion leaders
 - Knowledgeable experts who articulate opinions about specific issues in public discussion
 - People, who because of their interest in and knowledge of a subject, become experts and inform others either formally as spokespeople or informally through daily interaction with family members, colleagues, and peers
 - Frame and define issues that often have their roots in individuals' self-interests
 - Through the influence of opinion leaders, public opinion often crystallizes into a measurable entity
- Characteristics of opinion leaders
 - Informal opinion leaders (role-models)
 - Highly informed
 - Articulate
 - Credible on particular issues
- Formal and informal opinion leaders
 - Informal leaders
 - Inform others through daily interactions with family members, colleagues, and peers

- Formal leaders
 - Spokes people
- Agenda-setting
 - Media content sets the agenda for public discussion
 - People tend to talk about what they see or hear on TV news programs or read in newspapers
 - Media by selecting stories and headlines tell the public what to think about albeit not necessarily what to think
- Framing
 - Related to how journalists selected certain facts, themes, treatments, and even words to "frame" or shape a story
- Factors in persuasive communication
 - Audience analysis: Understanding characteristics such as beliefs, attitudes, values, concerns, and lifestyles helps to persuade target audiences
 - Appeals to self interest: People become more involved in issues or pay attention to messages that appeal to their psychological, economic, or situational needs
 - Audience participation: Attitude or beliefs are changed or enhanced by audience involvement and participation
 - Suggestions for action: People endorse ideas and take actions only if they are accompanied by a proposed action from the sponsor.
Recommendations for action must be clear to follow
 - Source credibility: A message is more believable to an audience if the source has credibility with that audience
 - Base on expertise, sincerity, and charisma
 - Channels: Different media with different features can be used for diverse public relations purposes
 - Clarity of message: The most persuasive messages are direct, simply expressed, and contain only one primary idea
 - Timing and context: A message tends to be more persuasive if environmental factors support the message or if the message is received within the context of other messages and situations with which the individual is familiar
 - Reinforcement: People tend to ignore or react negatively to messages that conflict with their value or belief systems
- Ethics of persuasive communication
 - Don't use false, fabricated, distorted, or irrelevant evidence to support

arguments or claims

- Don't intentionally use specious, unsupported, or illogical reasoning
 - Don't represent yourself as informed or as an expert on a subject when you're not
 - Don't use irrelevant appeals to divert attention or scrutiny from the issue at hand
 - Don't ask audience to link your idea or proposal to emotion-laden values, motives, or goals to which it actually does not relate
 - Don't deceive your audience by concealing your real purpose, your self-interest, the group you represent, or your position as an advocate of a view point
 - Don't distort, hide, or misrepresent the number, scope, intensity of undesirable features or consequences
 - Don't use emotional appeals that lack a supporting basis of evidence or reasoning that would not be accepted if the audience had time and opportunity to examine the subject itself
 - Don't oversimplify complex situations into simplistic either-or-choices
 - Don't pretend certainty when tentativeness and degrees of probability would be more accurate
 - Don't advocate something in which you do not believe yourself
- Two-step flow of communication
 - Public opinion is generally formed around views of people who have taken the time to sift information, evaluate it, and form an opinion that they express to others
 - Information is disseminated through the media to opinion leaders, who then interact with other less informed members of the public
- Multiple-step flow of communication
 - Opinion makers derive large amounts of information from the mass media and other sources and share that information with people
 - The attentive public is interested in the issues but rely on opinion leaders to synthesize and interpret information
 - The inattentive public are unaware of or uninterested in the issue and remain outside the opinion formation process