

THE FUTURE OF INDIAN PR

NEXT 

What the next 25 years hold
for PR and reputation management



CONTENTS

04

Introduction

05

Foreword

07

Welcome to the
NEXT 25!

09

How we found, what we
found: Research and
Methodology

10

CCO: the C-Suite
Reputation Steward

11

Ground control: Agency-
client dynamic – the
India story

12

Bridging gaps –
Trends & Tools:

13

Bottomline...

15-25

5 pillars and 25 strategic
trends for the next
25 years in PR

26

5 Actionable Steps for
the Next Five Years

28

Resources



Introduction

Consumer and stakeholder interests today are more dynamic and unpredictable owing to the pace at which technological trends, ESG efforts, and DEI initiatives are affecting investment, consumer sentiment, and brand image. A large part of PR endeavours is striking a balance between societal demands, corporate priorities, and business focus. Whether it was the Dominos' Youtube scandal or LEGO®'s Rebuild the world we can all agree that we now have unexpected factors at play that determine PR success or failure.

Against this backdrop, and to celebrate 25 years of MSL, we present THE FUTURE OF INDIAN PR NEXT 25, where we analyse and predict PR trends over the next 25 years through primary research and secondary analysis of global PR industry reports, academic research papers, interviews and talks by prominent PR practitioners, blogs and news reports. We identify focus areas, evolving communication trends, emerging technologies and explore how to leverage them to devise an integrated PR strategy.



Foreword

With great excitement I introduce our latest whitepaper, THE FUTURE OF INDIAN PR: NEXT 25. To commemorate 25 years of MSL, we have drawn on the collective expertise of the freshest minds in the country to craft this study.

This whitepaper is a forward-thinking exploration of the transformative shifts that will shape the future of public relations. We focus on the dynamic convergence of emerging technologies and evolving societal trends poised to redefine the PR landscape over the next 25 years.

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, social media evolution, and the growing importance of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives are reshaping the industry. This whitepaper delves into how these forces transform public relations strategies and challenge PR agencies to adapt and innovate.

We examine how PR, marketing, and reputation management professionals must develop new competencies to thrive in this evolving environment. From mastering AI-driven tools and leveraging big data insights to fostering authentic social media engagement and embedding ESG and DEI principles into brand narratives, the skill set required is expanding and diversifying.

India is at an inflection point as it marches towards its 100 years of independence. The size, scale and dimensions of a civilisational nation like ours will necessarily mean that we will have to shape our own unique model that best suits a sixth of the human race. Our analysis provides a comprehensive look at how industry leaders navigate these changes, offering actionable insights into the skills and strategies needed to remain at the forefront of PR excellence.

Public Relations will play a pivotal role in leapfrogging and building an ecosystem of credible and trusted storytelling. As technology and societal expectations evolve, understanding these shifts will be crucial for professionals aiming to build and sustain strong, credible reputations.

I commend the team for their comprehensive research, insightful analysis, and astute trend analysis. Confident in the depth and relevance of our findings, this whitepaper will serve as a vital resource for those seeking to anticipate and adapt to the future of public relations. By embracing these insights, businesses and professionals can strategically position themselves to lead in a rapidly changing landscape, ensuring continued success and impact in the years to come.

Amit Misra

CEO-South Asia, MSL





MSL





Welcome to the NEXT 25!

Adi Ignatius, in his Editorial for the September 2024 issue of the Harvard Business Review points out how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now a means of being more productive from “what once felt like cheating” just a year ago. While technology has disrupted every industry, generative AI, big data, and social media have thrown our industry into a cataclysm.

There are innumerable upsides and downsides to this but our focus is on identifying technological, social, and economic trends that show promise and how we should pivot to capitalise on them. This white paper covers topics ranging 24x7 social media brand spotlight, evolving sustainability goals, ESG (environmental, social and corporate governance) and DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) shifts, learning goals, and embracing new technologies.

We embarked on this study with a clear objective: to equip industry leaders with the insights and tools necessary to thrive amidst these changes. Our findings offer actionable guidance for adapting strategies, honing skills, and embracing the future of public relations.

As you delve into this whitepaper, we hope you find it a valuable resource that nudges us onto the path forward and inspires proactive engagement with the evolving PR landscape. The future of public relations is exciting and challenging, and with the right insights and preparation, it presents unique opportunities for growth and innovation.

Hemant Gaule

Dean, School of Communications and Reputation

Introduction

Consumer behaviour, influenced by technology has gone beyond what was once a simple platform replacement of newspapers with e-papers, books with Kindle, or TV with YouTube - it is now a change in behavioural patterns. Why this is important to Public Relations, reputation management and marketing is simple – the increasing integration of behaviour and economic sciences is the answer. In the words of Rory Sutherland, industry guru and celebrated author, “By using the language of Economics rather than the language of Marketing, you can elevate your discussion and therefore take your expertise into areas where you had no permission to operate before.”¹

Behavioural economics, as a branch of applied economics, gained traction post-2002 when one of the pioneers of the science, Daniel Kahneman was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize for Economic Sciences.² It was also the decade during which digital marketing & public relations gained traction. Quantifying metrics in this world, earlier crude and measured in sticks and stones of the number of phone calls returned by CEOs of brands, now come in a new and improved avatar. Reputation management metrics got granular with crisp ranks and numbers for sentiment analysis, reputation rankings and brand consistency. The thrill of seeing a number for the impact an action resulted in, fuelled by insights from behavioural sciences opened new avenues where we have only scratched the surface.

The world of integrated marketing connotes an entirely different meaning today. What would have meant strategising for the coming together of marketing, PR, advertising a decade ago, today has omni-channel and digital marketing thrown into the mix. It uses special communication vehicles to cater across marketing channels, through ideas such as primary & conditioned reinforcers, and gamification to run successful campaigns.

Consider gamification for instance. Tapping into the primal instinct of competition and play, brands have integrated fun into tasks they want consumers to perform. The result is not just amusement, but phenomenal engagement, and nudges towards brand loyalty. Volkswagen’s “Piano staircase”, where stairs at a Stockholm railway station were modified to play musical notes when stepped on, is a successful instance of gamification. It resulted in a 60% increase in stair usage to the escalator.³ This gets easier and more pervasive digitally, with the brand spending in gamification largely virtual — in badges, points and stickers making it relatively low-cost.

The Indian PR industry, valued at upwards of US\$ 250 million according to 2022-23 Study of Public Relations Insights, Nuggets and Trends, accounts for 15.4% of Asia Pacific and is all set to reach US\$ 421 million by 2027.⁴ With an estimated y-o-y growth of 11%, the North and West (of India) remain prime contributors, and the South is the fastest-growing emerging market. Most global players mark their presence in India through acquisitions and set up shop, now integrating operations across the country. Indian PR is a fairly developed market, and PR has moved from being an enabler to a driver – most PR teams directly report to the C-suite today.⁵ Though crisis handling and reputation management remain top priorities of PR deliverables, there is also a huge impetus on services like public affairs & advocacy, and internal communications.

With a booming digital economy that translates to high mobile and internet penetration, digital literacy and favourable demography, India is poised to become an exciting playground for PR and reputation management. In this report, we take a future 35,000-ft look into what the next 25 years might look like for the Indian PR industry on the ground.



¹ https://www.ted.com/talks/rory_sutherland_life_lessons_from_an_ad_man?subtitle=en

² <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/economic-sciences/2002/summary/>

³ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/262233618_Social_Stairs_Taking_the_Piano_Staircase_towards_Long-Term_Behavioral_Change

⁴ PRCAL SPRINT Report 2022-23

⁵ PRCAL SPRINT Report 2022-23

How we found, what we found: Research and Methodology

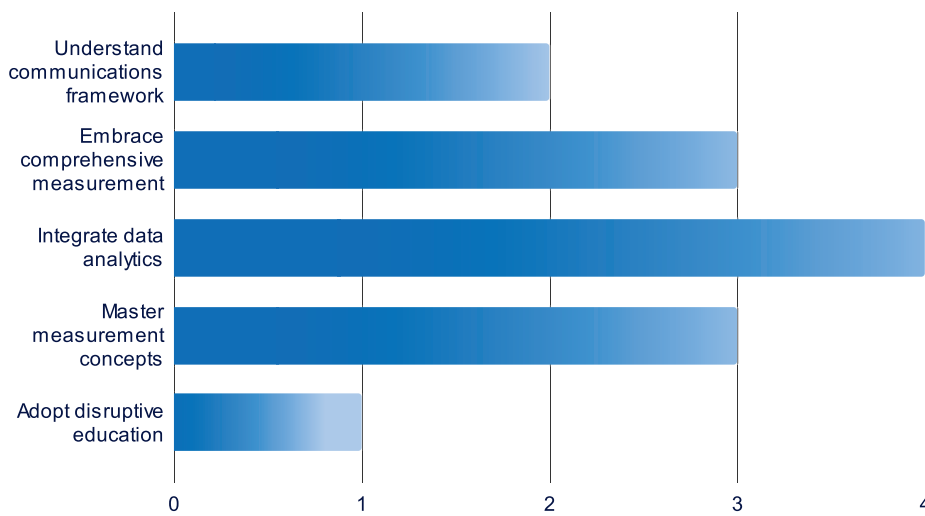
During the making of this report, we were aware of the challenges of asking pertinent questions to 100+ stakeholders: not only because the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, but because the parts are great in equal measure! Importantly, the questions were, perhaps, ambitious, if not entirely lofty. So it was down to breaking them up into manageable milestones.

To substantiate the theses that emerged from extensive secondary research conducted via available global PR industry reports, academic research papers, interviews and talks by prominent PR practitioners, blogs and news reports, it was necessary to gain perspective from practising experts across the board in the PR realm.

To lend a comprehensive multidimensionality, we felt it vital to not only look towards heads of PR agencies for answers, but accord proportionate attention to Chief Communications Officers (CCOs), business leaders, academics & analysts, mid-managerial media professionals, and of course, influencers from within the fraternity.

A study involving 100+ professionals, conducted between July and August, 2024, resulted in key findings about aspects that will rule the roost the next quarter of a century. Right at the onset, here's a glance at these aspects, which have been further enumerated in the report:

Research Priorities



At a glance: Aspects enumerated in THE FUTURE OF INDIAN PR: NEXT 25

CCO: the C-Suite Reputation Steward

As companies navigate complex stakeholder relationships and rapidly evolving media environments, the Chief Communications Officer's (CCO) role has expanded to become a vital strategic position. CCOs are shouldering broader leadership roles, contributing to organizational strategies involving various constituents and stakeholders. Reputation directly affects a company's bottom line.

The effect has gotten faster and more forceful now, with reputational risks escalating rapidly. In a survey, 83% of CCOs identified reputational threats and risks as the most critical challenge they face.⁶

"Every business has a reputation risk and a business risk. The crisis happens when the former impacts the latter. Many times I have seen that the views, triggered by social activists on a social platform, do not impact the actual sale of the product, till the regulator intervenes. That's when business suffers and with that, the reputation risk becomes greater. My suggestion in such cases has always been to assess and monitor the situation - understand the motivation of the "loud" voices, and take the discussion offline to try and resolve it respectfully. Do not feed the trolls — keep your employees, channel partners and regulators engaged through constant transparent dialogue. Engage with media and influencers regularly with humility, empathy and transparency (as much as the regulatory guidelines allow)", advises senior integrated communications, advocacy and sustainability specialist, Deepa Dey.

Consider the KFC chicken shortage crisis in the UK and Ireland which was skilfully managed by the PR team through some clever advertisement rollouts. The messaging was genuine, transparent, prompt and resonated with their brand voice.⁷

"There is a marked fall in the conventional belief that Brand Management = Advertising and Increasing realization about the influence of Corporate Brand Reputation in CXO KRAs and business scores. The PR & Corporate Communication corridor's inherent ability & intent to centrally manage Reputation with the help of Measurement & Data Analytics-led ERPs - efforts, resources and processes leading to a shift from being a cost to a revenue centre", details Siddhartha Mukherjee, Brand Balance.

The CCO's role has extended beyond corporate affairs to one that plays a significant role in strategy, and that of a growth contributor. As social media, micro-influencers, and social impact turn into factors that increasingly impact businesses, the CCO must communicate to the C-suite about how these impact strategies result in value creation.

"As consumers increasingly expect brands to take stands on social and political issues, CCOs will need to navigate this complex landscape skillfully. This involves deciding which causes to support and how to communicate these stances effectively without alienating segments of the audience", says Shilpashree Muniswamappa, Colgate-Palmolive.

With Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) being in the spotlight, every C-suite executive wants a share of the ESG strategy pie, and there is also a possibility of turf wars.

The CCO's role must extend beyond communicating the business to external stakeholders.

"Tracking and monitoring the effectiveness of message delivery is as important as the message", Sunaina Jairath, of Aliaxis conveys.

They must communicate the social pulse, analyse sentiment and rank the company's reputation for the C-suite which influences business decisions.

"CCOs will need to work closely with other C-suite executives, especially Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) and Chief Sustainability Officers (CSOs), to ensure a cohesive and comprehensive communication strategy", Muniswamappa adds.

A study by Gartner notes that companies with a CCO see an average 8% increase in Net Revenue Retention and a 6% increase in Gross Revenue Retention.⁸

"The role is in for a major transition with management expecting CCOs to have thorough knowledge about the commercial aspects of the business and provide solutions based on research and analysis. The next-gen CCO is expected to be comfortable with numbers and technology. Therefore, there is a continuous need for communication professionals to upskill themselves if they want to sustain in the role of CCO", predicts Amandeep Singh, Indraprastha Gas Limited.

⁶ <https://www.kornferry.com/insights/this-week-in-leadership/the-chief-communications-officer-2015-survey-and-findings-among-the-fortune-500>

⁷ <https://www.sac.ac.in/blogdetail/learn-from-these-6-brands/>

⁸ <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/gartner-survey-finds-83--of-chief-communications-officers-report#:~:text=CCOs%20also%20largely%20reported%20that,said%20they%20have%20less%20influence.>

Ground control: Agency-client dynamic – the India story

Brands are no longer judged, embraced and recognised for their products and services alone. Brand messaging, values, social proof, and soft aspects are increasingly gaining importance. Brands often find themselves caught in the crossfire, putting reputation managers into a fire-fighting mode.

In 2023, Zomato's advertisement for World Environment Day, advocating recycling faced backlash for hurting certain communities.⁹

PR and reputation management have to be extremely nuanced in a country as plural, vast and diverse as India.

"PR teams need to evolve their thinking and start moving beyond press releases. Driving a narrative with a 360° approach that has a mix of owned and earned media will be the way forward. Each company has thousands of stories which are hidden; Story mining will be the key", points out Amit Kumar Nanchahal, Pepsico India.

PR in India and all across the world has come a long way from having to evangelise digital advertising to identifying the marketing mix for omnichannel communication.

"Cost is of essence for a function like PR which is not related to revenue generation (not directly!). The value of AI-led tools will increase as proprietary content gains prominence. In a highly VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world, owning branded content is more important than using traditional media to push information. This would mean creating new properties for PR and using them as loudspeakers", offers Sanaj Natarajan, Wabtec Corporation.

The PR crystal ball shows rapid evolution, with greater digital marketing overlaps over conventional media, automation & Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven productivity, and attentive messaging.

Many industry pundits are sceptical about the readiness of AI for use, given copyright issues, click-baits involving fake news & disinformation, and declining creativity in a sea of deep fakes.

"We could have commoditization accelerated by AI, a poor, homogenous talent pipeline, all contributing to an inability to prove the value of PR", explains Arun Sudhaman of PRovoke Media.

That said, the industry has begun exploring the usage of automation and AI tools for monitoring and analysis. It can help a great deal with streamlining mundane tasks, giving PR professionals more time to focus on creative pursuits. We are looking at generative AI-led PR audits, detecting misinformation, and issuing data privacy and copyright infringement alerts. Businesses are also building bespoke trust platforms and large language models (LLMs) where vendor partnerships, adoption and enablement are catered to.¹⁰

"Front and centre are the advanced AI and natural language processing systems, which will facilitate previously unimagined individualization, prediction, and real-time sentiment analysis. These will be facilitated by immersive technologies such as augmented and virtual reality, which will allow for exciting, immersive, and interactive brand engagement. Blockchain technology and quantum computing are poised to change image issues of trust, transparency, and data processing in PR. As they evolve, these tools will create new opportunities for information verification, the war against disinformation, and actionable insights into vast datasets", Yashmeen Barua, Times Internet.

With businesses investing heavily in cloud computing and data analytics, marketing and decision-making metrics are expected to get more nuanced. Building cross-agency teams supported by AI for research and developing client pilots, and a data lake which is a repository of media reports, annual reports, analysis, social media posts and everything related are steps in that direction. Tools for real-time reputation tracking using AI-driven media analysis and social media posts are being deployed.

The lines between marketing, PR, data analysis and strategy will witness larger overlaps, as data-driven storytelling continues to take the driver's seat. We will witness businesses building storylines from data-driven insights provided by AI analytics from their in-house data lake. There will also be behavioural insights that can help with targeted micro-marketing in the digital space.

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-65852548>

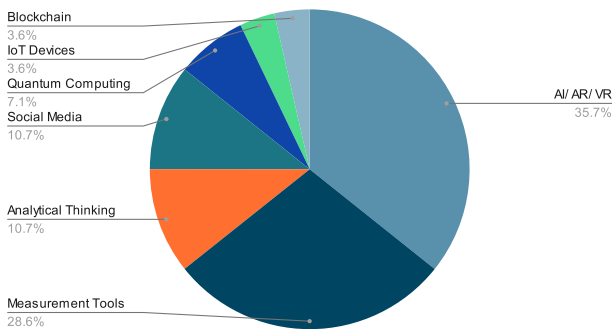
¹⁰ <https://www.provokemediamedia.com/long-reads/article/a-d-ai-alogue-what-the-leading-edge-of-ai-in-pr-looks-like>

Bridging gaps – Trends & Tools:

Various tools and technologies may seem like small pieces of the pie, but they all help build the second most important aspect of PR for the 21st century: Measurement. Tools and software are being developed and enhanced continuously— their full versions are accessible for no to negligible fee for trial. Industry leaders can no longer feign digital ignorance or impotence.

Artificial intelligence has rapidly evolved to create new opportunities through generative AI and large language models. These include enhanced and personalised customer experiences, diverse and faster content creation, and automated content generation. Jasper, an AI co-pilot for marketing, can translate texts into other languages, generate content for email marketing, blog posts, poetry and artwork.

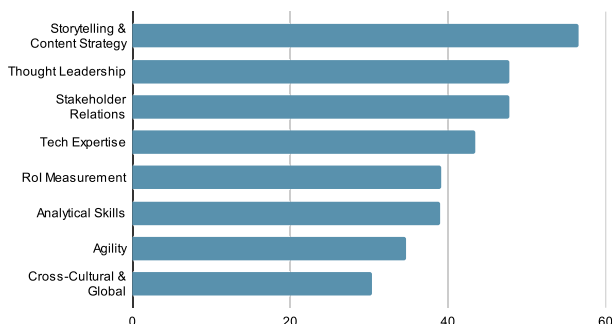
Emerging Tools & Technologies



From pitching new business and campaigns to developing content and automating value chains and media tracking, there are as many applications of artificial intelligence as perhaps there are members of the average brand team.

The agility that emerges from applying technology and ploughing back harvested data to enhance brand reputation must, however, be accompanied in heft by strategic storytelling to establish thought leadership, stable stakeholder relations, and technology expertise driven by analytical skills.

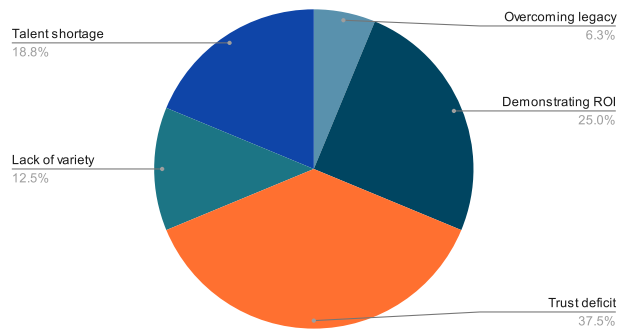
Competencies for Strategic Advisory



It is little wonder then, that amongst academics or career practitioners, the immediate priorities remain strategic reputation, end-to-end understanding of integrated brand marketing management and diverse talent, all geared towards delivering high data-driven value propositions.

Siddharth Mukherjee of Brand Balance says, “Academia must sensitize the future leaders about the role of PR & Corporate Communications in business success.” In this regard, a suggestion from the Indian Institute of Mass Communication faculty, Prof. Anubhuti Yadav is pertinent, “Make available a repository of courses and learning tools for all PR professionals.”

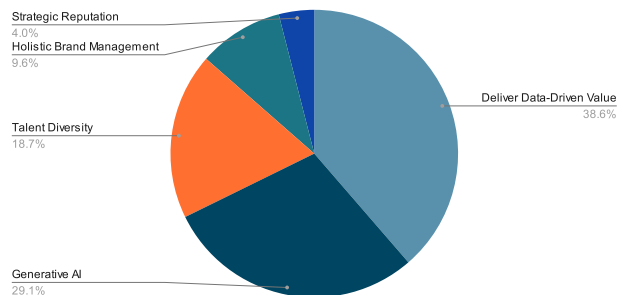
Challenges of the Future



Common challenges that echo amongst most respondents include an acute trust deficit from consumers and the subsequent constant need to demonstrate value towards client investments, followed closely by a shortage of talent— one that must not be confused by a ready workforce— and a lack of variety in communication owing to an increasing dependence on AI with little awareness or initiative in terms of using available research and nuance. Distant, but a concern nevertheless was also the complacency of legacy.

The chart below illustrates key research priorities for academics as well as analysts for the immediate five years as well as the next 25.

Top 5 priorities for the next 5 years



Bottomline...

These are interesting times with disruption knocking on doors every day through new technologies, changed social contracts and walking the tightest rope known to the PR industry given the socio-cultural and political environment.

"A deeper understanding of the organizational purpose, employee demography and needs, customer centricity, empathy towards the environment and humans, and a better understanding of the entire stakeholder group will help shape PR strategies. Technologies like AI, measurement tools to generate insights and data and other research mechanisms would only help enhance the effectiveness and efficiencies of a PR professional", says Sujit Patil of the Godrej Industries Group.

We believe that communication strategies require a detailed understanding of every layer – from crisis management, social messaging and targeted brand imagery.

As Rohit Bansal of Reliance Industries Limited succinctly sums up "Common sense will be the tool and emerging technology which will be most influential in shaping PR strategies!"

What will remain constant in this multivariable function is the value of being creative is not bogged down by Hotelling's law! ¹¹

Tomorrow's trials:

5 Challenges To Expect over the Next 25:

- 1. Tech Tsunamis — Surfing the AI Wave and Tech Disruption:** Adapting to the rapid evolution of AI, big data, and emerging social media platforms will demand agility and innovation.
- 2. Transparency 2.0 — Increased Demand for Transparency:** Meeting rising consumer expectations for corporate transparency and ethical behavior will require strategic PR management.
- 3. Crisis Command Center — Crisis Management Complexity:** Addressing the growing frequency and complexity of global crises will necessitate advanced crisis mitigation strategies.
- 4. Star Quest — Talent Acquisition and Retention:** Attracting and retaining top-tier PR talent adept in technology, strategy, and creativity will require organisations to foster a culture of higher risk-taking and voicing opinions without fear.
- 5. Compliance Crunch — Regulatory and Compliance Pressures:** Navigating the shifting regulatory landscape, particularly around data privacy, will demand closer and more frequent monitoring.

Tomorrow's triumphs:

5 Opportunities to Emerge over the Next 25:

- 1. Tech Fusion — Integration of Advanced Technologies:** Harnessing AI, VR, and AR for cutting-edge PR campaigns will elevate brand experiences and stakeholder engagement.
- 2. Data Power Play — Leveraging Data for Precision Targeting:** Advanced data analytics will enable pinpoint accuracy in consumer targeting and campaign performance measurement.
- 3. PR as a Game Changer — Enhanced Role of PR in Corporate Strategy:** PR will become pivotal in shaping corporate strategies, with a strong focus on ESG and CSR initiatives.
- 4. Global Sentiments, Local Impact — Global Reach with Local Relevance:** Digital platforms allow for crafting messages that resonate globally while maintaining local significance, maximising campaign effectiveness.
- 5. Community Catalyst — Building Community and Advocacy:** Developing robust brand communities and advocacy programs will drive deeper customer engagement and loyalty.

It is important to have a strong listening mechanism which most corporations have today. What is even more important is how we respond to what we listen to. The offline approach needs to move online and become more transparent. Companies increasingly need to take a position and a point of view. - Henna Kanal, Cipla Limited

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotelling%27s_Jaw





5 PILLARS AND 25 STRATEGIC TRENDS FOR THE NEXT 25 YEARS IN PR

P1 Technology and Innovation



The Magic of AI

AI will be used increasingly for daily, core tasks and is now built into our e-mail, word processing and online activities. It will enable us to be faster, better and more productive.

There will be experiments with Generative AI to create relevant and personalised content. With the data being generated at such a large scale, there will be efforts to utilize it across all functions in the pipeline.

Prof Anubhuti Yadav,
Indian Institute of Mass
Communication

Data drives decisions

Data analytics will help us learn, grow and make informed decisions. Used right, they can save us from judgement disasters.



Digital Transformation

Embracing digital technology will be non-negotiable, best use it to our advantage!

AI-powered data analytics for personalized messaging, blockchain for transparent communication, and chatbots for instant customer engagement are particularly influential in shaping PR strategies. Additionally, the use of virtual events for stakeholder interactions, social media sentiment analysis for reputation management, and interactive financial tools for user engagement will play a key role in driving effective PR initiatives within the fintech industry.

Swagata Gupta,
NPCI



Ethical AI

Moral and Ethics of using AI as a powerful tool will gain focus, especially concerning its responsible use.

The technologies available to any PR professional are double-edged swords. While they have drastically reduced the turnaround time to respond to any risk or crisis, they have also exposed the organisational functioning to the minutest level of scrutiny. The availability of digital tools in the hands of all and sundry makes it easier to make or mar the reputation of any organisation or individual. -

Amandeep Singh,
Indraprastha Gas Limited

Automation alchemy

Automation can help us do things faster and more efficiently, but using it wisely will entail cognizance of both personal and organisational limitations, as well as alignment with clients— as well as national goals.



Technology Friend

Technology will continue to play a significant role. As our best ally, it works at our behest.

AI & Shared media will play aides. It is the practitioners with their ability to read and deploy a tool who will make a difference between one organisation and another.

Debasis Ray,
formerly at Tata Trusts for close to two decades

P2 Consumer Behavior and Engagement



Consumer Behavior Chameleon

Consumer preferences will change faster than a chameleon, so we need to be quick to adapt and understand their new tricks.

For CCOs, it will also be back to basics—stable, consistent, and organic communications strategy and management will take priority over Big Bang one-off campaigns and inorganic push strategy. Marketing silos will further diminish, making content creation and marketing further overlap.

Radha Radhakrishnan,
Consultant - Entrepreneur

Social Media Magic

Social media is a powerful tool, but we need to use it wisely and responsibly. Consumers are looking to interact with other people and brands meaningfully in their virtual avatars as much as the real world.



Customer Delight

Customer service has moved from customer care to customer delight. We need to treat our customers like family and make them happy, providing “aha-experiences” at every point of the consumer journey.

While AI tools will make content generation easier, the most influential pathway that is needed is better media! The best PR strategies will be a combination of futuristic tools and technologies like AI, good old fashioned community building and creating newer avenues for influencers that go beyond celebrity marketing.

Padma Venkataraman,
Indian Institute for Human Settlements



Personalization Power

We need to tailor our messages to each customer, just like a tailor makes a custom suit.

Reputation management today should be a healthy mix of online and personal touch.

Philips Abraham,
Clariant

Gamification Fun

Making things fun and exciting can help us engage our audience and build loyalty.

P3 Reputation Management and Crisis Communication



Reputation is Gold

Reputation is moving beyond an image, to one of a tangible asset with measurable metrics.

“Learning to Learn” and trying out new things is the mantra to manage reputational risk in this age.

Ransom Dsouza,
GlaxoSmithKline
Pharmaceuticals Ltd

Crisis Prevention Squad

We need to have a team ready to handle any crisis that might come our way.



Crisis Prevention

Brands susceptibility to crisis will increase. We need Early warning systems and rapid response teams in place to handle them.

The proactive strategy of building goodwill is key to providing the buffer of ‘good faith’ to manage reputation risks. Best-in-class governance practices of corporate communications focused on transparency, mutuality and accountability are key

Rammohan Regulapati,
UltraTech Cement Limited



Ethical PR

Brand behaviour indoors and outdoors is on a constant watch.

With growing consumer preference for sustainable and ethically produced goods, CCOs will play a pivotal role in promoting and communicating their company's sustainability initiatives and CSR activities. Transparency and authenticity in communication will be key.

Shilpashree Muniswamappa,
Colgate-Palmolive



Quantified successes

We need to measure our success and learn from our mistakes through chosen metrics.

The role of a CCO is that of a Risk mitigation manager, a lookout person like a lighthouse to safely harbour the ships of reputation.

Himanshu Kapadia,
Grasim Industries Limited

P4 Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability



Purposeful PR

Purpose is a growth propeller today. PR has to be genuine, in line with brand vision and homogenous across channels. Greenwashing, Pinkwashing and other stunts are being cancelled with a vengeance.

Brands will move towards purposeful stuff; companies will look to scale up and make purpose-driven campaigns strategic. There will be a shift towards sustainability from regular CSR activities.

Amit Kumar Nanchahal,
Pepsico India

Social Proof Magic

People are more likely to do something if they see others doing it, so we need to show them the way.



Employee Happiness

Employees are our biggest brand ambassadors. Their happiness, well-being and comfort should be on top of the priority list.

With growing consumer preference for sustainable and ethically produced goods, CCOs will play a pivotal role in promoting and communicating their company's sustainability initiatives and CSR activities. Transparency and authenticity in communication will be key.

Shilpashree Muniswamappa,
Colgate-Palmolive



Ethical Influence

We can influence people's behaviour positively and ethically, just like a good teacher.

Emphasizing ethical practices and leveraging these innovations can significantly enhance trust and credibility, shaping a resilient future for reputation management in FinTech.

Swagata Gupta,
NPCI



Global Village

The world is becoming smaller, faster and more connected. PR has to be responsible, sincere and consistent with well thought DEI and ESG strategies in place.

Build stronger ties with local communities where manufacturing plants are located, addressing concerns, and fostering goodwill. Leveraging technology to respond swiftly and effectively to crises, and maintaining transparency and trust is key.

Yatin Padia,
Arvind Limited

P5 Strategic Leadership and Future-Proofing



Future Forecasting

Effective leadership that stays attuned to industry trends, maintains a keen awareness of market developments, and cultivates a strong network will be crucial for future-proofing their organization.

With exaggerated and tall claims, there could be a trust deficit, and the audience may be sceptical of messages coming not only from brands and organisations but also from the media. Also, with the increase in the use of AI, content may lack variety and human touch.

Prof Anubhuti Yadav,
Indian Institute of Mass
Communication.

Knowledge is power

We can observe behavioural trends and understand the customer to craft bespoke experiences.

Cultural Nuances

Businesses that will thrive over the next 25 years will be the ones who understand how our plural society functions and diversity evolves.



Glocal PR

We need to think globally and act locally to reach people all over the world while creating meaningful impressions in India

Consultancies need to reignite their understanding of industry happenings and what's doing the rounds of 'word of mouth'. Go back to the traditional drawing board for this and begin building relationships like we did in the non-existent digital era.

Pooja Trehan,
Head PR & Content, Jio World
Centre



Storytelling Power

We need to tell stories that people love and remember, just like a good book.

Using VR and AR for new methods of storytelling with which to engage our audiences and spearhead communication strategies that work across borders and connect the world. They will fulfil an enlarged part including sustainability communication, regulatory compliance messaging and cyber security transparency. The ease of deployment would have a far more important marketing need: personalising communication at scale and across platforms as well as diverse cultural contexts and locations.

Yashmeen Barua,
Times Internet

5 Actionable Steps for the Next Five Years

Here are some easy-to-implement steps for the near future, that will likely make several of the strategic trends we foresee in the distant future easier to navigate:



Invest in AI and Data Analytics

Prioritize investments in AI and data analytics tools to gain deeper insights into consumer behaviour and improve decision-making.

Connecting PR activity to simple, measurable outcomes. Also, research demographics of the industry, barriers to entry and progress. And research into corporate behaviour and expectations

Arun Sudhaman,
PRovoke Media

Develop a Strong ESG Strategy

Develop a comprehensive ESG strategy that aligns with the company's values and addresses key sustainability issues.



Foster a Culture of Continuous Learning

Encourage ongoing learning and development among PR professionals to stay updated on industry trends and best practices.

With growing technology risks, the comms function will need to evolve to have a seat at the technology table as well, and we cannot do that if we don't understand the technology. This means the skills and talent we hire for and build within our teams will also need to evolve.

Shiwani Vyas,
Lowe's India



Build meaningful Relationships with Influencers

Identify and cultivate relationships with key influencers and opinion leaders in the industry to amplify brand messaging.

I have always believed that Context is critical, and the sweet spot of success is at the confluence of Content and Context. Tools and Technologies to me are there to aid this process, not own it. Analytical thinking and finding strategic solutions can't be 'outsourced' to the tools!

Deepa Dey



Focus on Measurement and Evaluation

Implement robust measurement and evaluation frameworks to track the effectiveness of PR initiatives and make data-driven adjustments.

The PR industry needs to rigorously adopt and apply the principles of Measurement, Account Planning, and Media Planning. By doing so, we can enhance every stage of the communications process, ensuring that each step is data-driven and strategically sound. Understanding and mastering these concepts in depth is essential for the industry to progress. The PR Industry Bodies need to bring drastic disruptive education and orientation programs.

Siddhartha Mukherjee,
Brand Balance

Resources

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