

Abstract

The Public Relations (PR) of Mega-Events refers to the ways in which organizers communicate with participants, journalists, the general population, the Internet community, employees, and volunteers, both in normal and in crisis situations. In this way, PR carries a certain responsibility for the success and failure of a Mega-Event. Against this backdrop, this dissertation asks about the PR features in common at both the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa and the 2009 and 2010 Hajj events in Saudi Arabia. In a second step, the dissertation theorizes and identifies PR features that could apply to other Mega-Events (e.g. the Olympic Games, or the EXPO).

In the theoretical discussion of the topic, no academic work has been done comparing the Public Relations of more than one Mega-Event. Until now, Klenk (1999) and Al-Ken (1995) were the only studies that dealt with the communication involved at a Mega-Event—though each only looked at a single event. In addition, their results are out-of-date; their findings can only be conditionally applied to today's Mega-Events. Relatively new research on Mega-Events provide only minimal definitions (Murati & Shen, 2008; Roche, 2000; Weiß, 2008). Since none of these were well-suited for this research project, this dissertation offers its own definition of a Mega-Event: *Mega-Events are events that occur at a specific time in a specific country, that involve long-term planning, in which multi-national masses take part either directly or through media.* Grunig's (1984) Four Models organizational theory constitutes the theoretical background for PR. The theory classifies different types of PR according to the kind of contribution it makes towards ensuring that an organization achieves its goals.

Since pioneering research on the PR of Mega-Events had yet to be done, it seemed appropriate to proceed in a qualitative and exploratory way. The dissertation triangulates distinct data collection techniques including content analysis (e.g. by government news reports, brochures, websites), observation (e.g. of media programs, workshops, volunteer relations), and interviews (e.g. with press officers, state secretaries, journalists). All the data were then analyzed through content analysis and with the software MaxQDa, and evaluated.

One of the most important findings of this dissertation is that a number of PR activities, measures, approaches, and instruments were present at both Mega-Events in the following areas: media work, crisis communication, health communication, internal communication, participant communication, community and volunteer relations, online and international PR, as well as campaigns. On this basis, the dissertation develops a theoretical schema of categories with which the PR of other Mega-Events can be analyzed, described and classified. In addition to the areas of activity just listed are the categories: the "PR function within the organizational structure," "strategic planning," and "PR personnel."

The research shows that Mega-Events have a specific composition of PR activities—they are distinct, that is, from state, corporate, or NGO PR. Communication with participants as well as volunteer relations were likewise specific to Mega-Events, in terms of time and the number of individuals in the target group. A further common characteristic was the autonomy of PR: companies, NGOs, less-organized groups and also individuals implemented PR for Mega-Events independent of the official organizers.

On the other hand, a number of differences are highlighted. This was most evident in the media work, where the World Cup organizers communicated with 20,000 international journalists, whereas at the Hajj, it was 200. It could be noted that, overall, the various PR areas and structures of the World Cup must be classified higher in Grunig's PR models than that of Hajj 2009 and 2010.

The study also shows that the theory of the four PR models is well-suited to describe the PR reality of Mega-Events. Most of the PR approaches could clearly be correlated to the models. One theoretical gap in the theory, however, could be closed.

It became clear that in Saudi Arabia, even independent of the Hajj, homage to the royal family is an important component of PR content. In addition, the study gathers findings on Mega-Events that go beyond PR: in both cases there were special visas associated with the event, instant meals, special scheduling of school vacation, and workers were hired from other countries. In the case of South Africa, the study finds that the transparency of political decisions suffered under the World Cup. With respect to Hajj, the study was able to gather new insights on the number of volunteers and pilgrims, the organizational structures and infrastructures.

In addition to its academic contribution, the dissertation also delivers valuable insights for practice. Among the eighteen implications offered are proposals for a customer assistance system that shows how employees can communicate with participants on a more personal level.

The findings of this study form the beginning and a foundation for further inquiry about the PR of other Mega-Events, such as the Olympic Games or the World Fairs. These future research findings will either further confirm or falsify the statements of this study as to common PR characteristics.