

Abstract

This study is a thematic meta-analysis of the status of, and trends in international public relations research. Extending a previous meta-analysis study by Molleda & Laskin (2005) on international public relations literature, this study first gives a critical examination of the ambiguity in the definitions of international public relations in current literature and the methodological implications on the data set of this study. Besides the three scholarship types of public relations research (introspective, practice/application and theory), this study has further identified 4 theoretical paradigms (functional/management, intercultural, critical/cultural, and sociological) through which scholars and researchers have conducted their research.

The second unique contribution of this study is the assessment of Asian-related international public relations literature, since no previous study has specifically looked at this growing body of literature so far. Among the 186 international public relations articles published in academic journals, trade publications and book chapters from 2005 to 2008, findings suggest that international public relations research is consolidating its status in the academic field. The number of theory building articles in this study has reached almost the same level of practice/application articles, even with two theory building articles found in trade journals, an area of research that has not been cultivated by professionals in the past. Asia's rapid economic growth in recent years enhanced the theory development regarding Asian international public relations practice. Functional/management perspective, with characteristics of ease of understanding and implementation, continues to be the mainstream research approach. Intercultural perspective is increasingly grabbing the attention of scholars with more research conducted from this theoretical framework. Critical/cultural perspective is more often conducted in western countries than in Asia. Sociological perspective is still in its embryo status of development in international public relations arena, which has only two articles published during the period of this study. Its intrinsic abstruse nature and obscurity in implementation is a hindrance to its future development in this discipline where more emphasis is placed on its practicability.