CONFERENCE NAME – «SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INDUSTRY IN THE DIGITAL AGE» SECTION NAME – JOURNALISM THE ROLE OF PR TECHNOLOGIES IN BRANDING

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Abstract. Branding in the digital era depends increasingly on public relations (PR) technologies as the principal mechanism through which corporate values are translated into public perception. This paper examines the role of PR technologies — media relations, content marketing, social media management, influencer relations, and crisis communication — in constructing and sustaining brand equity. Based on a conceptual synthesis of marketing and communication literature, the study identifies four interconnected dimensions of brand equity affected by PR practice — brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty — and proposes an integrated model linking specific PR technologies to each dimension. The principal contribution is a framework that treats PR not as a supporting function of marketing but as a distinct, trust-based communication mechanism whose comparative advantage lies in earned and shared media credibility. The framework offers practical guidance for organizations seeking to align communication activity with long-term brand-building objectives.

Keywords: branding, public relations, PR technologies, brand equity, media relations, digital communication, corporate reputation.

Introduction. Branding has ceased to be a static exercise in logo design and slogan creation, becoming instead a continuous process of relationship management between an organization and its multiple publics [1,2]. Public relations (PR) technologies occupy a central position within this process, functioning as the primary mechanism through which a brand's identity is translated into public perception. Unlike advertising, which relies on paid, one-directional messaging, PR operates through earned and shared media, third-party validation, and dialogic engagement, which grants it a higher degree of perceived authenticity [3]. This authenticity is precisely what makes PR technologies uniquely effective instruments of brand-building, since audiences tend to trust journalistic coverage, expert commentary, and peer recommendation considerably more than overt commercial messaging.

The increasing fragmentation of the media landscape has intensified the strategic importance of PR within branding practice. Where twentieth-century brand

communication was mediated by a small number of gatekeeping institutions, the contemporary environment is characterized by a multi-channel ecosystem in which audiences move fluidly between owned, earned, shared, and paid media [4]. Classical PR theory already positioned two-way symmetrical communication as the model most conducive to building mutual understanding between organizations and their publics [6], a principle that remains foundational for digital-era brand communication. This shift requires organizations to coordinate PR activity across a wider set of touchpoints than before, while maintaining message consistency. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual framework that connects specific PR technologies with the dimensions of brand equity they are best positioned to strengthen.

Conceptual Framework. The study employs a qualitative conceptual synthesis of international research on branding, public relations, and digital communication [1–5]. The literature suggests that effective brand-building through PR requires an integrated combination of media relations, content creation, direct audience engagement, and reputation management capabilities.

On this basis, five PR technology categories are proposed: media relations, referring to the cultivation of relationships with journalists and industry analysts to secure independent coverage; content marketing, including expert articles, case studies, and branded storytelling that demonstrate thought leadership; social media and community management, enabling real-time engagement and sentiment monitoring through the functional building blocks of identity, conversation, sharing, and reputation [8]; influencer and blogger relations, which grant access to niche audience communities through the perceived credibility and relatability of influential individuals [9]; and crisis communication, protecting accumulated brand equity at moments of vulnerability.

These technologies are interdependent rather than isolated tools. Media coverage reinforces content distributed through owned channels; social media engagement amplifies both; influencer partnerships extend reach into niche communities; and crisis-communication protocols determine how quickly a brand can recover public trust after a disruptive event. Brand equity is therefore treated as the cumulative outcome of coordinated PR activity rather than the result of any single technology in isolation.

Proposed Model and Scientific Contribution. The main result of the study is a framework linking five PR technologies to the four classical dimensions of brand equity — brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and brand loyalty [5,7,12]. Table 1 summarizes these relationships.

PR technology	Primary function	Brand equity dimension	Typical channel
Media relations	Third-party validation	Perceived quality	News media, press releases
Content marketing	Thought leadership	Brand associations	Blogs, articles, video
Social media management	Direct engagement	Brand awareness	Instagram, Telegram, X
Influencer relations	Peer credibility	Brand associations	Blogger/influencer channels
Crisis communication	Reputation protection	Brand loyalty	Statements, hotlines, FAQs

Table 1. PR technologies and their contribution to brand equity dimensions.

The scientific contribution lies in connecting these five technologies to the specific equity dimensions they best serve, rather than treating PR as an undifferentiated support function of marketing, a distinction consistent with contemporary critical perspectives on PR theory and practice [10]. This creates two conceptual shifts. First, PR technologies are positioned as trust-based mechanisms whose value derives from earned and shared media credibility rather than paid reach. Second, brand equity is treated as the outcome of coordinated, multi-channel PR activity, requiring integrated planning across media relations, content, social engagement, influencer partnerships, and crisis preparedness rather than isolated campaigns. Direct executive engagement on social platforms has similarly been shown to strengthen relational outcomes between organizations and their publics [11].

It is also necessary to acknowledge the risks associated with the intensive use of PR technologies in branding. Audiences, particularly younger demographic cohorts, have become increasingly adept at distinguishing organic content from sponsored or manipulated communication. Instances of perceived inauthenticity — undisclosed influencer partnerships, astroturfing, or exaggerated claims in press materials — can inflict disproportionate reputational damage precisely because they violate the trust that PR-based branding depends upon. Regulatory bodies in several jurisdictions have responded with disclosure requirements for sponsored content, reinforcing the principle that the strategic value of PR technologies is contingent upon transparent and ethical application.

Conclusion. PR technologies constitute an essential, and increasingly central, component of contemporary branding strategy. Media relations, content marketing, social media management, influencer collaboration, and crisis communication together form an integrated toolkit through which organizations construct, sustain, and, when necessary, repair brand equity. The proposed framework connects these five technologies with the four classical dimensions of brand equity, offering a theoretically grounded basis for aligning communication practice with long-term brand-building objectives.

Practical Implications. The framework can be applied by communication and marketing departments as a basis for structuring integrated PR planning. Organizations can map existing PR activity against the five technology categories to identify gaps in coverage of specific brand-equity dimensions, and can prioritize investment according to strategic objectives — for example, strengthening media relations where perceived quality is a competitive weakness, or developing crisis-communication protocols where brand loyalty is vulnerable. The framework is conceptual and requires empirical validation; future research should test the proposed relationships using survey or case-study methods across different industry and market contexts.

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