

DOI: 10.17064/iüifhd.52951

THE MEDIA RELATIONS FIELD IN PUBLIC RELATIONS: EVALUATIONS OF RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE STRATEGIES BY TURKISH MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

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Abstract

It is known that in the early years of its emergence as a profession the public relations field was approached as media relations. Today, public relations has reached a scope that cannot be evaluated as media relations only; however, when observed in terms of the contemporary public relations approach in which a relational paradigm comes to prominence, it is seen that the media relations field has maintained its importance. This study aims to present the effect of relationship maintenance strategies on media professional - public relations practitioner relationships from the perspective of Turkish media professionals. Research was conducted among 181 media professionals. The findings indicate that media professionals tend to evaluate the openness strategy as the most effective strategy in terms of positive relationships between public relations practitioners and media professionals, followed by the strategies of positivity, assurances and sharing of tasks. This research also indicates that networking is considered as having the least, nearly neutral effect on relationship maintenance strategy.

Keywords: Media Relations, Relationship Maintenance Strategies, Media Professional – Public Relations Practitioner Relationships

HALKLA İLİŞKİLERDE MEDYAYLA İLİŞKİLER ALANI VE TÜRK MEDYA PROFESYONELLERİNİN İLİŞKİ SÜRDÜRME STRATEJİLERİNE YÖNELİK DEĞERLENDİRMELERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Öz

Halkla ilişkilerin ortaya çıktığı ilk yıllarda medyayla ilişkiler olarak ele alındığı bilinmektedir. Günümüzde halkla ilişkiler sadece medyayla ilişkiler alanı olarak değerlendirilemeyecek bir kapsama ulaşmıştır; ancak ilişkisel paradigmanın ön plana çıktığı çağdaş halkla ilişkiler yaklaşımı açısından bakıldığında da medyayla ilişkiler alanının sahip olduğu önemi korumayı başardığı görülmektedir. Halkla ilişkilerin; kurumlar ile çeşitli hedef kitleleri arasındaki ilişkilerin tesis edilmesi, geliştirilmesi ve sürdürülmesine odaklanan stratejik bir yönetim fonksiyonu olarak tanımlanmasını sağlayan ilişkisel paradigma, diğer tüm hedef kitlelerle olduğu gibi medyayla olan ilişkilerin de çeşitli stratejiler doğrultusunda yönetilmesini önermektedir. Türk medya profesyonelleri perspektifinden medya profesyoneli - halkla ilişkiler uygulayıcısı ilişkilerinde, ilişki sürdürme stratejilerinin etkisini ortaya koymayı amaçlayan çalışmada, 181 medya profesyonelinin dahil olduğu bir araştırma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma doğrultusunda, medya profesyonellerinin olumlu halkla ilişkiler uygulayıcısı – medya profesyoneli ilişkisi açısından açıklık stratejisini en etkili strateji olarak değerlendirdiklerine; açıklık stratejisini sırasıyla olumluluk, teminatlar ve görev paylaşımı stratejilerinin takip ettiğine yönelik bulgulara ulaşılmıştır. Araştırma ile ağ oluşturma stratejisinin ise en az ve nötre yakın etkiye sahip ilişki sürdürme stratejisi olarak kabul edildiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Keywords: Medyayla ilişkiler, İlişki Sürdürme Stratejileri, Medya Profesyoneli – Halkla İlişkiler Uygulayıcısı ilişkileri

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Makale geliş tarihi | Article arrival date: 23.11.2015

Makale kabul tarihi | Article acceptance date: 15.04.2016

INTRODUCTION

When the historical development process of the public relations discipline is examined, it is seen that it was primarily defined as media relations and the public relations success of organizations was based on obtaining reflection in the media. From the functional perspective that dominated in the early years of public relations, the most prominent relationship in terms of organizations and their target audiences was between public relations practitioner and media member with primary importance placed on the organizational messages appearing in the media.

Within the scope of the public relations discipline that has since expanded to include many specialty fields, it is understood that this field has reached a structure that cannot be defined only as media relations; nevertheless media relations maintained its importance in public relations. With the relational paradigm that is supported by the co-creation perspective prominent in contemporary public relations approaches, organizations' relationships with all their target audiences besides media gained importance, and consensus is built towards the requirement that public relations cannot be considered within the narrow scope of media relations only. The media have maintained their importance in terms of the relational paradigm as a target audience that organizations must develop a relationship with and as having an important role in reaching other target audiences.

The relational paradigm suggests that relationships of organizations with different types of target audiences must be managed strategically in accordance with the reciprocity principle. Along with the paradigm becoming dominant in the field of public relations in recent years, public relations is defined in discussions as the management of relationships; public relations became positioned as a management function that establishes, develops and maintains relationships between an organization and its target audiences strategically. Relationship management underlines that process through forming and maintaining positive and long-term relationships between organizations and their target audiences. To achieve this they must apply a number of strategies, and these relationships between organizations and target audiences must be managed according to the strategies. When viewed from this aspect it can be said that, in terms of successful relations between an organization and the media as a main target audience, it is of key importance for public relations practitioners to manage relationships with media employees in accordance with relationship maintenance strategies, which can be listed as, openness, positivity, sharing of tasks, networking and assurances.

In order for successful and positive relationships to be developed between an organization and media, public relations practitioners have the important role of acting as bridges in the relationships between public relations practitioners, the organization and the media. When public relations practitioners manage media relations through learning media employees' relational requirements and expectations, positive relationships between the organization and media are established. In addition, in order to establish successful media relations, public relations practitioners need information about what

media professionals consider to be important in their relationships with an organization and public relations practitioners and what they consider necessary for positive relationships.

The study sought information concerning how relationships between public relations practitioners and media employees must be managed from the relational paradigm perspective, as well as evaluations of media employees' relationship maintenance strategies. Within the scope of the study, which aims to determine the importance that media professionals place on relationship maintenance strategies and which applications in the scope of which strategies have a positive effect on people, the research was conducted among individuals working in the media. The study sought to establish in accordance with the findings, some results that can be directive for public relations practitioners that need to establish positive and long-term relationships with media professionals.

Management of Mutual Interdependence and Mutual Benefit Relationships in Public Relations: The Media Relations Field

Media relations, which can be expressed as communicating with journalists, experts and editors from newspapers, magazines, radio, television and internet-based communication environments in local, national, international and sectoral levels (Fawkes, 2004: 3), are defined by relationships that organizations constitute with journalists, editors and analysts (Khodarahmi, 2009: 536). At the present time, in addition to public relations being a management function that moves within a very large field toward organizations' strategic targets, media relations is also one its most important fields (Göksel, 2010: 114).

Media relations within the public relations field defines the mutual interdependence and mutual benefit relationships between organizations and media as sides of these relationships. Public relations, which stays in the position of a representative in the relationships of organizations with media, needs media in order for an organization to be apparent for all target audiences through organizational content appearing in media. Media, as the other side of the relationship, need information originating from public relations due to the obligation of producing news. Because of this, it is possible to consider relationships between public relations practitioners and media employees as being interdependent and mutually beneficial.

Wilcox, Ault and Agee argue that journalists and public relations practitioners need each other, media are obliged to obtain ideas and materials from public relations sources, and public relations practitioners depend on media as an area to exhibit and present their stories (1997: 241). Media's need of public relations, which originates from their need for news sources, is the factor that bases media's relations with public relations practitioners on mutual dependence. The main benefit obtained from their relationships with public relations practitioners and organizations is resources that would meet the need for news and for information that qualifies as news.

Today, as the media struggle to meet their need for news and fill in the deficit in the daily news, the news and information furnished by public relations professionals holds an important role (Yayınoglu, 2013: 78); Public relations practitioners act as advance reporters providing journalists information they need in their work (Supa & Zoch, 2009: 3). Media relations, which positions public relations as a function that supports media professionals, defines an organization-public relationship type that can be benefited by both media employees and public relations practitioners as two parties of the relationship.

The fact that organizations also depend on collaboration and the good intention of various communication tools like newspapers, radio, television and local magazines (Craib & Vibbert, 1986: 242) illustrates the necessity of media for public relations practitioners. In addition to being a target audience with which public relations professionals must establish positive relationships, media serve a mediating role by transmitting organizational contents to other target audiences. Public relations practitioners depend on media to transmit organizational contents to a broad range of target audiences.

Organizations as units of the economic system depend on news media to strengthen their reputations among their target audiences and so contribute to their capacity to maintain their activities and reach their shareholders. Another reason why organizations need news media lies in the distribution of some kinds of information that can fail to evoke trust if transmitted directly by the organization itself and if it cannot be experienced directly through consumption or interaction (Einwiller et al., 2010: 302). Bringing organizational content to target audiences via media has a place in public relations based on the fact that target audiences accept as news the messages served them by media and consider it to be more trustworthy than content shared directly by the organization. According to this perspective, media professionals are gatekeepers that evaluate information transmitted to them as newsworthy and, if deemed worth publishing, present it to target audiences.

The term “gatekeeping” proposed by Kurt Lewin has been interpreted for news process by David Manning White. According to White’s gate keeping model, journalists have their own role in gathering, shaping, and transmitting news items (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009: 11–16). Gatekeeping theory suggests that media members have influence on the gathering and selection of news items. Particularly at the news selection stage some events and cases are ignored (Işık, 2014: 89), and others are reported as news. Journalists decide which information is newsworthy and such information is shaped by gatekeepers and presented to a wide range of target audiences via the mass media.

Public relations practitioners see journalists as a target audience, a tool to reach other wider audiences and as gatekeepers that represent and meet their informational needs (Baskin et al., 1997: 196). Also on this point, is the question of when public relations information reaches gatekeepers and, after being filtered by media workers, gets published. In this regard public relations can play an active role in deciding when the organizational contents will be transmitted to gatekeepers and through which media it

should be presented to target audiences and can thus be somewhat directive in terms of planning.

Media relations is an active process that has, to a limited extent, some control regarding public relations practitioners' messages that they want to transmit to target audiences, timing of the messages, source of the information and the effect of the subject presented on the media agenda (Zoch & Molleda, 2006: 280). Agenda-setting and framing theories are worth examining as theories that provide the control situation that public relations possesses through the aspect of organizational contents planning on media placement and reaching the target mass in a timely manner.

According to the agenda-setting theory, components on the media agenda that attract attention affect factors in the target public's agenda (Carrol & McCombs, 2003: 36-37). The theory points out that information originating from public relations taking part in the media agenda means that it will take place on the targeted public's agenda. From this perspective, public relations can play an active role in bringing organizational content and a wide range of target audiences together through having some power of control.

Framing theory points out that it is more possible for information that originates from public relations that has been prepared appropriately to the expectations and needs of media to gain approval of gatekeepers and thus reach a broad range of target audiences.

Framing theory suggests that practitioners that have a command of media processes can frame stories toward journalists most effectively, and that hence an affinity would occur between story expectations of the journalist and practitioners' presentation of information, therefore increasing the possibility that the information will appear in the media. Many studies have exhibited the success of public relations practitioners in influencing the media agenda and the public agenda with public opinion. And the rate of news that emerges from the relationship that public relations presents or that journalists have with practitioners increases from 25 to 80 percent inferentially (Sallot & Johnson, 2006: 83). The agenda-setting and framing theories reveal that public relations takes the position of a news source by creating content that can enter the media agenda and the public agenda. Along with public relations being a news source for media, it is not possible to say that all information originating from public relations sources will enter the media. In order for organizational content to appear in the media the information originating from public relations must be newsworthy.

With regard to the newsworthiness of public relations content can be approached within the scope such important items as a new product, an important newly established connection, high-level assignment, improved and developing results, a basic campaign or project, research findings, acquisition or merger, employees reaching success such as fund-raising for charity (Bland Theaker & Wragg, 2005: 66-67). Transmitting newsworthy information to media increases the possibility of placing organizational content, whereas non-newsworthy information means a loss of time for both public relations practitioners and media employees and can affect media relations negatively.

The Media Relations Field from the Perspective of the Relational Paradigm

It is well known that in the early years of the emergence of public relations the approach taken was within the narrow scope of establishing relations with the media rather than as a strategic management function, and therefore journalism talents had priority. Notably, in that era relationships with other target audiences were ignored and only relationships with media were focused on. Hence public relations were seen as media relations, and public relations were practiced only by people with journalist backgrounds who placed extreme importance on the amount of media exposure obtained as the measure of success of public relations. This determination also applies to the development of public relations in Turkey. In the first years of public relations practice, it is seen that public relations practitioners were experienced journalists and in general public relations was considered to be media relations.

During the first years of the discipline when the functional perspective was the accepted discipline, the focal point was the application of techniques in the production of strategic organizational messages. From this functional perspective, the main relationship of interest was between public relations practitioner and with an emphasis on journalism techniques and production techniques (Botan & Taylor, 2004: 651-652). Later, as the process of development of public relations brought changes, the functional perspective started to lose validity; public relations attracted interest with its broad range of application and scope of various branches of expertise. After the importance that public relations has as a strategic management function gained understanding, a transition from functional perspective to co-creation perspective occurred.

The co-creation perspective which is valid for the current contemporary public relations approach and relational paradigm (Botan & Taylor, 2004), in addition to underlining the importance that media relations have in public relations, emphasizes that organizations' relationships with their target audiences other than media must be managed strategically. In terms of the relational paradigm, the media relations field, which has maintained the importance it held since the early years of public relations, contacts with the same points as the co-creation perspective, shares the same values and has been dominant in recent years. The relational paradigm, by carrying public relations beyond the status of only a media relations field, considers media as a target audience that must be related to and a tool to reach other target audiences such as investors, shareholders, raw material / service providers, consumers, and the public and public institutions.

The co-creation perspective and relational paradigm, having brought to the fore proposals regarding the positioning of media relations in public relations, generated important changes in the structure of public relations that go beyond measuring public relations' success through the amount of reflection in media. Today, the success of public relations and the value it adds to an organization is evaluated in accordance with the contribution it makes to the quality and effect of relationships between the organization and its various target audiences including media.

Media relations lost the importance it had in the past from the perspective of the rela-

tional paradigm that brought about a consensus based on the concept that public relations' major aim is to establish and develop relationships between organizations and their target audiences (Watson & Noble, 2005: 185). The relational paradigm abolishes the misconception that media relations meets the scope of public relations completely, and considers media relations as an expertise and application field of public relations. When viewed from this perspective, it can be said that, along with the aforementioned changes, the relationships between the organization and media or between public relations practitioners and media have maintained their importance from the early years when the public relations field emerged up to current times when the relational paradigm has become dominant.

Evaluation of Relationship Maintenance Strategies with Regard to Media Relations

The important place of the media from past to present in public relations underlines the fact that organizations must have positive relationships with media workers. In order to establish positive relationships with media and manage successful media relations, public relations practitioners and media professionals both must have positive perception and evaluations toward each other as two parties in a relationship.

According to Len-Rios, Hinnat and Park, it has been conventional wisdom for many years that journalists perceive themselves as the opponent party in their relationships with public relations practitioners; this estimation positions public relations practitioners as people who want to obtain free promotion and who pose an obstacle in front of the media (2009: 57). Media employees having this negative perspective, which can stem from this kind of estimations toward public relations practitioners, constitute a problem in the establishment of successful and positive relationships with media.

Since the late 1990s, use of the relationship concept has increased in public relations research (Coombs & Holladay, 2015: 689) and management of relationships between organizations and their target audiences has gained importance.

An academic perspective has come into prominence that emphasizes the central focus of public relations should shift from communication to relationship management (Willis, 2015: 681). The relational paradigm, which views public relations as a strategic management function that focuses on establishment, development and maintenance of relationships between organizations and their various target audiences, attaches importance to media as a target audience with which organizations are obliged to develop positive and long-term relationships.

Waters, Lindall and Morton, who mention that public relations is developed as a discipline that gravitated towards relationship management, state there are indications that the relationship management principles affects the way that parties of the relationship perceive each other and the way they communicate with each other, and this applies to media relations as well (2010: 243-244). According to the contemporary public relations approach applied at present, it is an unarguable and admitted reality that organizations'

relationships with their target audiences must be managed strategically. Organizations' basing their relationships with their target audiences on specific strategies enables establishment, maintenance and development of long-term positive relationships with target audiences and additionally gains an abstract positive value such as obtaining the support and consent of their target audiences, thus providing a positive image and reputation perception.

Developing and maintaining relationships between organization and target audience is a goal for organizations that seek long-term, stable and satisfactory relationships with their target audiences (Ki & Hon, 2008: 5). Organizations that succeed in developing long-term relationships based on trust, understanding, good intention and tolerance can gain important support at a high level that can contribute to their said organizational goal and strategies. When viewed with regard to organization – media relations, it can be said that media relations originate an important collaboration where both organization and media can benefit.

Relationship maintenance strategies that come into play in order for organizations to develop long-term and positive relationships with their target audiences have the potential to develop long-term relationships if the organizations refer to them in management of their relationships with their target audiences and act accordingly. Relationship maintenance strategies are adapted to the public relations discipline with the relational approach echoing interpersonal relations literature. Relationship maintenance strategies that are effective in management of relationships between organizations and their target audiences including media can be listed as positivity, openness, sharing of tasks, networking and assurances.

Grunig and Huang elaborate on these strategies, which bear a resemblance to public relations strategies, are necessary in order to maintain interpersonal communication relationships: positivity (efforts that render the relationship enjoyable for both parties), openness (clarifying opinions and feelings), assurances (dependence and love), networking (having common friends) and sharing of tasks (sharing responsibilities, having common responsibilities) (2000: 36). Looking from the perspective of the relational approach that has become established in public relations, involving a focus on maintenance of long-term positive relationships between the organization and its target audiences, it becomes apparent that relationship maintenance strategies that form a base for successful management of interpersonal relations, would provide perspective and reflection on the management of relationships between organizations and their target audiences in public relations.

Relationship management strategies, which are seen as indicators for producing desired quality relationship outcomes (Ki & Hon, 2008: 6), can be further defined as follows:

The first relationship maintenance strategy is positivity. Positivity can be defined as parties of the relationship being satisfied with the relationship, having a positive attitude toward the other side of the relationship and positive evaluations over the course of events in the relationship. Positivity takes a critical role in the inclination toward main-

tenance of both interpersonal relations and relationships between organizations and their target audiences. Relationships in which the parties carry a negative viewpoint are not possible to maintain at length. Negative evaluations towards relationships generally emerge when one side thinks that other side does not invest in the relationship, does not channel enough time and energy, does not benefit from the relationship, and the expenditures in the relationship are more than the earnings and rewards to be gained from the relationship.

The positivity strategy, which includes positive feedback, acting cheerfully, being polite in communication, pleasing the target audiences and avoiding criticism of the other side (Hung, 2004: 266), plays a strategic role in establishing positive relationships between organizations and their target audiences.

The openness strategy, which emphasizes clarity between parties throughout the relationship, calls for a sharing of feelings and opinions with each other in a precise manner. When this strategy is applied to relationships between an organization and its target audiences, both sides are open to communication and it emphasizes that organizations must share their decisions and applications. Likewise organizations exhibiting the tendency to openly share remarks, suggestions and demands related to organizational decision, policy and activities with other organizations may also fall within the scope of this strategy.

Public relations define trust, collaboration, satisfaction, the ability of control and dialog as the main properties and underline them, because without these, relationship between the organization and its target audiences regresses. As it contains a high-level investment, trust becomes more important in long-term relationships. Trust decreases only because of a crisis or is eroded due to the perception of negative organizational behavior. Also in these cases, clarity becomes important for the rebuilding of trust as a critical relational property and the makings of collaboration between an organization and its target relationships. Transparency provides an array of output that is beneficial in terms of structuring a relationship. As with the building of trust so transparency can be seen as essential in the management of a relationship that supports accountability, collaboration, cooperation and mutual understanding (Jahansoozi, 2007: 399). Decisions, applications and policies that fit openness and transparency matter for relationships based on trust between organizations and their target audiences. When relationships are constructed on the basis of the principle of transparency, mutual trust by parties of the relationship would reach to its highest level. In situations where relationships are impaired for various reasons, the critical role of transparency comes to the agenda for the rebuilding of trust between the parties.

Public relations practitioners acting according to the strategy of openness in their relationships with media employees, place great importance on transmitting information about the organization clearly and intelligibly. Also, in response to requests from media workers, supplying them with information in a way that would meet their expectations

and in the direction of the openness principle can be evaluated within the scope of the strategy of openness.

An organization can gain an important advantage towards being proactive in its media plans and can become an active partner with media in long-term relationships if they adopt a clear approach toward questions from the media and act honestly (Varghese & Rahman, 2014: 275). This result can indicate the extent to which the openness strategy has been applied in relationships between a public relations practitioner and a media target.

The sharing of tasks, which is among relationship maintenance strategies, points to a situation of two parties sharing duties and undertaking responsibilities jointly. It also reveals that the sharing of tasks strategy matters with regard to maintaining interpersonal relationships. While some duties are carried out by one of the partners, carrying out another duty is the other party's responsibility. With regard to long-term relationships and maintainability of relationships, joint sharing of duties and taking equal responsibility is important.

Ledingham and Bruning, state that public relations is a two-stage process in principle; these stages are (1) organizations focusing on relationships with their target audiences and (2) actualizing relationship related to activities and programs that would establish organization – public relationships with the main public members. Through this process, communication's role in building relationship is clarified. Organization must deal with behaviors that target audiences would benefit from as much as behaviors that would benefit the organization (2000: 66). Public relations practitioners must not only act through the organizational perspective in their relationships with media professionals, but also consider media members' relational necessity and expectations and fulfill their part in the relationship.

Networking, one of the relationship maintenance strategies, can be expressed as parties of the relationship having common acquaintances and friends. According to this strategy, relationship parties being in the same network and having common acquaintances are important with regard to dependence on a relationship and maintenance of a relationship.

Another of the relationship maintenance strategies is assurances. Assurances can be described as parties in relationships showing their willingness towards actualizing their promises. Relationships are generally shaped based on the parties' expectations from the relationship and from each other, and in cases where there are expectations regarding an understanding about a possible establishment of relationship to start up. At the establishment stage of relationships, the parties provide assurances to each other about their expectations that will be met. When there emerges mutual trust and belief between parties of the relationship towards assurances to be fulfilled, a tendency to start relationships emerges as well.

AIM AND METHODOLOGY

It is known that media hold a distinct importance in public relations as they are among the main target audiences that organizations must develop positive relationships with, and have the role of mediator in reaching other target audiences. The media relations field, which has safeguarded from past to future its importance in public relations, is examined from the relational paradigm perspective in this study. Relationships between public relations practitioners and media professionals are approached as a form of relationship in which the mutual dependence and mutual benefit factors come to prominence. Through this study, an attempt has been made to determine to what degree relationship maintenance strategies, which are suggested by the relational paradigm to organizations in order for them to establish positive and long-term relationships with their target audiences and to develop existing relationships, affect relationship management between public relations practitioners and media employees.

The aim of this study, by conducting research within its scope, is to determine the effect of various efforts appropriate to relationship maintenance strategies on the relationships between public relations practitioners and media employees and to evaluate the relationship management strategies aimed at media employees. Based on the research conducted, it is further aimed to reach findings that would determine which applications toward which relationship maintenance strategies they find most effective in their relationships with public relations practitioners and hence to uncover some data that can serve as guidance for public relations practitioners who need to establish positive relationships with media.

Another result that the research aims to reach is to reveal whether media employees' evaluations towards relationship maintenance strategies are differentiated by the following variables: whether or not they had worked previously in the public relations field and whether or not they fell within the scope of communication sciences in terms of education field.

The following questions are established as the basis of the research aimed according to the aforementioned goals:

RQ1: Do Turkish media professionals find relationship maintenance strategies effective for a positive public relations practitioner – media professional relationship?

RQ2: Which relationship maintenance strategies do Turkish media professionals find more effective for a positive public relations practitioner – media professional relationship?

RQ3: Does the effect that relationship maintenance strategies have on positive public relations practitioner – media professional relationship, differ according to Turkish media professional having work experience in the field of public relations?

RQ4: Does the effect that relationship maintenance strategies have on positive public re-

lations practitioner – media professional relationships differ according to Turkish media professionals' education field being within the field of communication sciences?

After deciding that data needed in accordance with the purposes of the research can be obtained through the survey method, a survey form was designed. In the form, in addition to the questions regarding demographical properties including gender, age and educational status of the media employees participating in the survey, there are questions asking if their education field is within the scope of communication sciences or not, if they worked in the field of public relations before or not, duration of their work in media, whether they work in the field of public relations synchronously with journalism and the position they hold in the media. In addition, by using Likert-type scale 5 statements for each maintenance strategy, which means that 25 statements in total are prepared within the scope of the study, media professionals were asked to specify the level of their agreement with the statements.

In the study, convenience sampling, a type of non-random sampling, was used. Non-random sampling can be used when the researcher does not have an example list that contains all the elements in the population all the time and when some of the elements of the population are impossible to reach, when the population that is planned to be studied is too broad, like a country's population (Böke, 2009: 122). Convenience sampling is one of the non-random sampling methods that can be stated as including people that the researcher thinks can be included within the sample of the study, and can be reached.

By having the survey form online, a mail that contains a link to the form was sent to media members. In the study, in which 181 out of approximately one thousand media members were invited at certain intervals in the period that includes the months of May and June, all participants' answers were put to evaluation, as there were no problems encountered. It is known that the sample's power to represent the population would increase if more media employees had participated in the study. Accordingly, the main limitation of the study can be said to be all of those media professionals who were sent the survey forms but did not respond despite a reminder mail sent at regular intervals. At the evaluation stage of the research, by applying coding to survey forms that gain feedback, the forms were prepared for processing. The coded data were computerized using SPSS program and with frequency analysis; data analysis was analyzed by referencing total average tables.

When measuring the reliability level of statements regarding relationship maintenance strategies that can be effective in relationships of media professionals with public relations practitioners, it is determined that it has a high incidence of reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = ,955$).

FINDINGS

78 of 181 media members that responded to the survey (43.1%) are women and 103 are

(56.9%) men. Examining the distribution of individuals who participated in the study, it is seen that 26% (47 people) are in the 18-28 age range, 45.9% (83 people) age 29-39, 18.2% (33 people) age 40-50, 7.7% (14 people) age 41-61 and 2.2% (4 people) over age 62.

One of the media members who participated in the study (0.6%) is a primary school graduate, 17 (9.4%) are high school graduates, 34 (18.8%) have associate degrees, 87 (48.1%) have bachelor's degrees and 42 (23.2%) have postgraduate level education. While 71.8% (130 people) of media members stated that their education is within the scope of communication sciences, 28.2% (51) responded that their education is not within the scope of communication sciences.

Distribution of 181 media members, who answered the survey, in terms of media they work in is as follows:

47 people (26%) agency, 45 people (24.9%) newspaper, 36 people (19.9%) magazine, 35 people (19.3%) internet journalism, 16 people (8.8%) radio and 36 people (19.9%) television. The survey form is arranged for multi-field choice, as media members can work in more than one media.

46.4% (84 people) of media members who are included to the study stated that they work in the news field, 18.2% (33 people) in sports field, 17.1% (31 people) in economics field, 22.7% (41 people) in culture and arts field, 13.8% (25 people) in healthcare field, 13.3% (24 people) in entertainment field and 16.6% (30 people) in another field. Again, as media members can work in more than one media field, the form is arranged for multi-field choice.

When we examine the distribution of media members that answered the survey according to their time period in journalism, it is seen that 6 people (3.3%) have journalism experience of 0-1 years, 22 people (12.2%) 1-3 years, 28 people (15.5%) 3-5 years, 35 people (19.3%) 5-7 years, 22 people (12.2%) 7-10 years and 68 people (37.6%) are journalists for more than 10 years.

While 17.7% of media members that joined the study (32 people) stated that they were working in the field of public relations concurrently with journalism and 82.3% (149 people) stated that they were not working in the field of public relations concurrently with journalism. When we look at the distribution of the period of working time in the field of public relations of media members that work in the field of public relations concurrently, it is seen that 3 people (1.7%) were working in the field of public relations together with journalism for 0 to 1 years, 6 people (3.3%) 1 to 3 years, 9 people (5%) 3 to 5 years, 8 people (4.4%) 5 to 7 years, 4 people (2.2%) 7 to 10 years, 2 people (1.1%) 10 or more years. While 35 of 181 media members that answered the survey (19.3%) stated they had worked in public relations before, 146 (80.7%) stated that they did not have work experience in public relations.

It is seen that 39 of the media members that contributed to the research (21.5%) are ser-

vice managers, 24 (13.3%) work in the editorial office, 21 (11.6%) are writers, 75 (41.4%) are reporters, 4 (2.2%) are interns and 18 (9.9%) fill other positions in the media.

After the questions, which aim to reveal distributions according to various demographic variables among the media members respondents to the survey form, the participants were asked to state their level of agreement to a series of statements regarding relationship maintenance strategies as 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree not disagree, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly agree.

It is seen that media employees' evaluations of statements within the scope of the positivity, openness, sharing of tasks and assurances strategies, which are designed to reveal the effect that these strategies may have on the relationship between public relations practitioners and media professionals, are quite close. It is seen that media professionals think that efforts convenient to the aforesaid strategies have a positive effect on their relationships with public relations practitioners. It is determined that the sharing of tasks strategy has somewhat less effect than the other strategies, yet they thought that it did affect relationships positively. In order to better understand media employees' evaluations of strategies that they think have a positive effect on their relationships with public relations practitioners, averages of agreement to statements regarding each strategy can be taken and the case of strategies having a positive effect on relationships from the perspective of media employees can be revealed. The evaluation average by media professionals about statements regarding the positivity strategy having a positive effect on relationships with public relations practitioners is 4.24; the average for the strategy of openness is 4.31; the average for the sharing of tasks strategy is 3.96, and the average for the assurances strategy is 4.16.

According to the research findings, it is noted that media employees evaluate networking, which is another relationship maintenance strategy, to be less effective than the other strategies in their relationships with public relations practitioners. It is seen that media employees evaluate relationship management applications within the scope of this strategy as having a lower or nearly neutral effect on their relationships with public relations practitioners. It is determined that the average of the degree of agreement of media employees to the statements within the scope of networking is 2.91 (Table 1: 54-56).

In the last stage of analysis of the data set, which was obtained by processing the survey forms with the SPSS program, an analysis was conducted regarding whether media members' evaluations towards relationship maintenance strategies differ according to whether or not they are also working in public relations. After observing that most of the values obtained as a result of the test conducted are as $p > 0.05$, it is precipitated that the evaluations of statements do not differ according to the condition of working in the field of public relations. The following statements do indicate a significant difference in groups in case of working in the field of public relations in the past:

- It is found that evaluations towards the statement, "Media employees obtaining information they need from public relations practitioners to meet their need of news affects the relationship positively" differentiates according to the situation of

working in the field of public relations previously ($p<0,05$). While the average, which shows the degree of agreement to this statement of media members who worked in the field of public relations previously is 4.09, the average of agreement to this statement among media member who did not previously work in public relations is 3.62.

- It is found that evaluations of the statement, “public relations practitioners’ organizing events that bring together all media members they are in contact with, affects the relationship positively” differentiates according to the situation of working in the field of public relations before ($p<0.05$). While the average that shows the degree of agreement of media members that worked in the public relations field before is 3.31, average of agreement to the statement of media members who did not previously work in the field of public relations is 2.64.
- It is found that evaluations of the statement, “Public relations practitioners’ knowing people that media members know and are in touch with them, affects the relationship positively” differentiates according to the situation of having worked in the field of public relations before ($p<0.05$). While the average that shows the degree of agreement to the statement of media members who worked in the field of public relations before is 3.11, the average of agreement to the statement of media members who did not work in the field of public relations before is 2.55.

It is seen that values obtained as a result of the analysis conducted towards revealing whether or not having an educational background in communication sciences affect the evaluations towards relationship maintenance strategies are $p>0.05$ and it is concluded that evaluations of statements did not differentiate according to educational field being related to communication.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is worth noting that in the years when the public relations discipline emerged the media relations field was focused upon and the discipline was defined as media relations. With reinterpretation of the public relations discipline with its expanding scope that includes new fields of expertise and contemporary approaches, it has reached a dimension that cannot be defined as media relations only.

The field of media relations guarded its importance with regard to the relational paradigm, which has come into prominence in the public relations discipline in recent years and presents public relations as a discipline that focuses on establishment of positive relationships between organizations and their target audiences and on the strategic management of relationships. The paradigm suggesting that organizations must manage their relationships with their target audiences in accordance with strategies known as relationship maintenance strategies, considers media as a main target audience that organizations must develop relationships with.

Relationship maintenance strategies, which are positivity, openness, sharing of tasks, networking, assurances, may be directive in the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships between organizations and media professionals. In the study, which aimed to reveal evaluations by Turkish media professionals towards relationship maintenance strategies, a research was conducted aiming at determining to what degree relationship maintenance strategies affect relationships between media professionals and public relations practitioners.

In line with the findings obtained from the research, the openness strategy is seen to be accepted as the most effective strategy with regard to public relations practitioner – media professional relationships, It is concluded from the research that Turkish media professionals think that management applications that fit the openness strategy have the most positive effect on their relationships with public relations practitioners. The openness strategy is followed by positivity, assurances and sharing of tasks strategies, respectively. It is determined that the networking strategy, which can be defined as media professional and public relations practitioners having social networks and common acquaintances in the same networks, is accepted as the least effective strategy by Turkish media professionals in their relationships with public relations practitioners.

The aforesaid findings are important and instructive. They can develop an understanding of which applications within the scope of which strategies media professionals accept as the most effective in management of relationships of public relations practitioners with media. Media professionals find that a clear communication style and efforts that are in keeping with the transparency principle are relatively effective with regard to positive relationships with public relations practitioners. Turkish media professionals also consider effective for positive relationships public relations practitioners' adopting a creative approach, applying the positivity strategy in their relationships with media professionals. Another strategy media professionals consider effective for public relations – media relationships is the development of their trust and confidence by public relations practitioners through assurances presented to them that their relational needs and expectations would be met in the process of relationship. In management of relationships, where mutual benefit and interdependency between media professionals and public relations practitioners come to the fore, Turkish media professionals attach importance to public relations practitioners being aware of their responsibilities and exhibiting efforts that are appropriate for the sharing of tasks strategy.

It has been concluded from the research findings that evaluations of media professionals towards relationship maintenance strategies mostly do not differentiate according to the variable of having worked previously in the field of public relations. This finding shows that the needs and expectations that emerge in relationships between media members and public relations practitioners do not differ according to the working conditions of the field of public relations. In addition, another finding obtained through the research shows that the positive effect of relationship management strategies on the relationships of media professionals with public relations practitioners does not differ according

to the variable of education field being within the scope of communication sciences. On the basis of this finding it can be said that evaluations of relationship maintenance strategies would not show an alteration based on the media professional's education field.

In examining the effect of relationship maintenance strategies on Turkish media professionals' relationships with public relations practitioners from their perspective, the findings revealed a number of results that have the characteristic of a guide for public relations practitioners. It is necessary for public relations practitioners who want to establish positive relationships with media professionals to carry out efforts that are appropriate to the strategies of openness, positivity, assurances and sharing of tasks, among which openness occupies first place in the management process of relationships with media.

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Table 1: Evaluations of Statements Regarding Relationship Maintenance Strategies

Evaluations of Statements Regarding Relationship Maintenance Strategies		Average	Standard Deviation	N
Positivity Strategy Average: 4.24	Public relations practitioners' being conciliation-based in their relationships with media employees affects the relationship positively.	4.12	.927	181
	Public relations practitioners that prepare materials originating from public relations considering media members' requirements in their relationships with media employees affects the relationship positively.	4.29	.887	181
	Public relations practitioners' managing their relationships with media employees based on mutual understanding and good intention in a way that would pay attention to demands and expectations of both sides affects the relationship positively.	4.26	.846	181
	In cases of possible conflicts in the relationships between public relations practitioners and media employees, public relations practitioners' acting in a constructive way to overcome the problem with minimum loss affects the relationship positively.	4.17	.879	181
	Public relations practitioners' adopting an approach towards establishment of trust in their relationships with media employees affects the relationship positively.	4.37	.895	181
Openness Strategy Average: 4.31	Public relations practitioners' presenting in a clear and understandable way to media employees information related to the organization they represent affects the relationship positively.	4.35	.910	181
	Media employees' being able to reach the public relations practitioner when they need to affects the relationship positively.	4.49	.867	181
	Public relations practitioners' not hiding negative information they know about the organization they represent affects the relationship positively.	3.97	1.098	181
	Public relations practitioners' acting according to the principles of honesty and transparency in their relationships with media employees affects the relationship positively.	4.44	.908	181
	Meeting the demands of information coming from media employees by public relations practitioners in a way that meets the expectations affects the relationship positively.	4.31	.865	181

Sharing of Tasks Strategy Average: 3.96	Public relations practitioners' being aware that they are dependent on media employees in order for the information about the organization they serve to appear in the media and managing their relationships according to this affects the relationship positively.	4.13	.972	181
	Media employees' obtaining information they need from public relations practitioners to meet their news needs affects the relationship positively.	3.71	.975	181
	Public relations practitioners' acting in accordance with the public benefit principal, knowing that they are one link in the chain of information, affects the relationship positively.	4.01	.901	181
	Public relations practitioners' being aware of their responsibility to supply the necessary information for media employees to write news based on accuracy and truth affects the relationship positively.	3.94	.982	181
	Public relations practitioners' knowing that media and public relations need each other for success in management of relationships with media employees affects the relationship positively.	4.01	.931	181
Networking Strategy Average: 2.91	Media employees' having acquaintances in common with the public relations practitioners that they are in contact with affects the relationship positively.	2.81	1.182	181
	Public relations practitioners' organizing events bringing together all media members that they are in contact with, affects the relationship positively.	2.77	1.164	181
	Media employees' receiving from surrounding acquaintances positive information regarding the public relations practitioners they are in contact with affects the relationship positively.	2.99	1.072	181
	Public relations practitioners' organizing events where senior staff of the organization and media employees can come together affects the relationship positively.	3.33	1.033	181
	Public relations practitioners' knowing people that media members know and being in touch with them affects the relationship positively.	2.66	1.171	181

Assurances Strategy Average: 4.16	Public relations practitioners' holding to promises that they have made to media employees affects the relationship positively.	4.30	.895	181
	Public relations practitioners' being aware of the needs of media employees and acting in order to meet these needs affects the relationship positively.	4.17	.847	181
	Public relations practitioners' showing that they want to maintain a long-term relationship with the media members affects the relationship positively.	3.69	.909	181
	Public relations practitioners' presenting an image of the organization they represent by sharing all the information needed in a complete and correct manner to media employees affects the relationship positively.	4.25	.824	181
	Public relations practitioners' giving the impression that they can be reached by the media employees at any time they need to affects the relationship positively.	4.40	.874	181