



## **7. Evaluating the effectiveness of government PR tools in shaping public perception**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines the effectiveness of government public relations (PR) tools in shaping public perception, with a focus on the dissemination of information through mass media and special events. Utilizing a structured survey of 100 respondents from Karnataka, India, the research explores demographic factors such as age, gender, education, occupation, and income to evaluate the reach and impact of government PR strategies. The findings indicate that 45% of respondents rarely encounter government PR messages, while only 5% engage with them consistently. Additionally, participation in government-organized events remains low, with 34% of respondents never attending such initiatives. Despite these limitations, 50% acknowledge that media and special events effectively capture public attention, while 46% believe PR tools contribute, albeit slightly, to raising awareness about government initiatives. The study highlights a significant gap in the reach and engagement of PR efforts, emphasizing the need for improved communication strategies. Enhancing digital platforms, leveraging interactive content, and adopting more inclusive outreach methods could help bridge this gap, fostering greater public engagement and trust in government communications. The findings underscore the importance of refining PR approaches to ensure broader dissemination of government messages, ultimately strengthening transparency and public participation. This research contributes to the discourse on strategic government communication and offers insights into optimizing PR tools for more effective governance.*

**Keywords:** Government public relations, PR tools, public perception, mass media, communication strategies, digital platforms, public engagement, transparency.

### **Introduction**



Public relations is both a professional practice and a subfield of communication with its own research and theory base. The field of public relations is developing into a theoretically based area of applied communication that has the potential to inform several areas of communication/mass communication and to offer theoretical and conceptual tools useful in health, risk, and political communication, among others. (Barlik, 2023) The term 'public relations' has three meanings: (1) information given to the public, (2) persuasion directed at the public to modify attitudes and actions, and (3) efforts to integrate attitudes and actions of an institution with its publics and of publics with that institution. (Childs, 1952)

Public relations scholars have long argued that public relations can (in fact, must) help to improve communities. Some have advocated a communitarian approach to public relations (Leeper, 1986,2000). Drawing on the Chicago School, Kruckeberg and Stark (1988) argued that organisations have a role to play in their community and that organisational interests are best served when community interests are served. These early societal-level approaches to public relations provide a key foundation for today's theorising about public relations. (Taylor, 2011). "Public relations is the planned effort to influence opinion through good character and responsible performance, based upon mutually satisfactory two-way communication (Cutlip et al., 2000). Public Relations is defined "as an attempt, through information, persuasion, adjustment, and contacts, to seek support for some activity, cause, movement, institution, product, or service" (Mehta, 2011).

PR plays a crucial role in the success and sustainability of businesses, organisations, and individuals. Primary goal being the building and managing reputation through which trust and credibility can be enhanced, alongside maintaining a positive image and opinions of the public, investors, and other stakeholders.

One of the main functions of public relations is related to the concept of interactivity. With the Internet revolution, technologies for online public relations have accelerated. With the rate of change in media technology, the world realised that communication diversity is a great defence for the "masses" against magic bullets. Many think PR is not a legitimate subject for study. Yet subjects like psychology and sociology too had similar beginnings. Disciplines may be seen as families that share gene pools. Interdisciplinary work draws on a mixture of sources, for example, PR has drawn on psychological concepts (persuasion) and methods, ethical



concepts (from moral philosophy) and sociological concepts (power & gender). It is also possible to draw together different disciplines (tourism, religious studies, sports studies) in a creative way to bring about new understandings on all sides. Interdisciplinary thinking draws upon a wide range of subjects to try to understand a problem. It is central to public relations education and to its practitioners who need to engage with multiple interested parties, perspectives, and relationships. PR is an emergent discipline with porous boundaries to a range of other disciplines: marketing, management, organisation studies, communications, journalism, media studies. This also shows that different disciplines inculcate their own ways of thinking and seeing the world (paradigms), as well as introducing different (not better or worse, just different) points of view. (L'Etang, 2007).

Effective communication is the core of public relations, which aims at building a symbiotic relationship between an organisation and their target audience to gain trust and credibility through various channels such as media releases, social media, speeches, and events. During a crisis, handling a negative situation involves developing strategic communication to address and mitigate the negative impacts of the organisation's reputation. Holding the reputation, brand building, and management through various communication strategies and activities. At times, to do this PR can get extended beyond the boundaries of an organisation by supporting local initiatives, participating in community events, and addressing community concerns. At the same time, maintaining relationships with the media is also very crucial for positive coverage in the media. In some cases, lobbying and advocacy are also necessary to influence public policies and regulations. But maintaining high ethical standards, with measurable metrics, is also crucially important where in PR campaigns, the organisation's reputation is evaluated with data-driven metrics for future strategies, reflecting transparency, integrity and trust in the profession. Applying these concepts in the PR profession helps navigate the complex landscape of different dimensions of communications.

In government public relations, the main focus is on political communication, which is typically campaign communications, which entails media relations, speechwriting, strategic messaging to key publics, and supporting get-out-the-vote and fund-raising efforts. Political communication consists of regulated speech that influences campaigns for elected office. And government relations are a euphemism for direct lobbying of policymakers to influence



regulations or laws. How Public relations and public affairs are associated. Generally, government communications began to be more widely referred to as public affairs or public information during the early 20th century. This phrasing has an intriguing backstory. The government refers to it as public affairs, but why? After publicity agents and publicists were successful in the 1800s and early 1900s in representing corporate clients, government organisations also started using these experts to influence public opinion. There were large commercial interests that were worried about how this trend could affect their industry. They put pressure on Congress to limit the amount of money that could be given to government agencies for PR (public relations) purposes, which were frequently included in the category of PR functions. Congress came under further criticism from legislators and activists, who feared that public relations efforts by the government could be used to sway public opinion away from the interests of the people. As a result, what became known as the Gillett Amendment was added to the Congressional legislation that created the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) in 1913 (Taylor & Kent, 2016).

### **Literature Review:**

Hayyattun Nuffus & Irwandy (2022) found that digitisation and new media have made information widely accessible, changing government public relations (GPR) in government entities. This article focusses on the ministry of energy and natural resources' GPR and Instagram communication with the public. The study employs media richness theory and computer-mediated communications theory to examine Instagram as a MEMR communication medium. 2020 was a turning point where digital media was the main alternative communication channel due to covid-19. Social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Line, TikTok, Snapchat, Tumblr, Pinterest, and Reddit allow users to create and share content, share opinions, and share common interests in many contexts. Instagram is one of many social media platforms.

Kwabea (2021) used excellence theory and systems theory to examine public relations in public institutions and its efficacy in achieving organisational goals. Qualitative research using purposive sampling employing PR methods such as speeches, memos, notice boards, social media platforms, print and broadcast channels, organisational websites, and semi-structured



interviews was used. Based on the interview themes, thematic data analysis was done. The study also found that PR is essential for public institutions and part of the dominant coalition.

Aflaha & Budhi Suhara (2020) examine how computer-based digital media has changed PR strategy. Produce and contribute to products and programmes that enrich PR practitioners' adaptation to computer-based digital media, especially in village government as an executive agency in PR that provides public service information, manages information and documentation, and provides facilities and infrastructure for public service information distribution. Information societies use information as a valuable economic resource, interact with other communities via the global communication system, and access superhighway information. The empowerment of the village community is an attempt to develop independence and public welfare by improving knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviour, ability, awareness, and resource use through policies, programmes, activities, and assistance that match the problem and the needs of the community village needs. E-government is government agencies that use technology and the internet to support public services. According to the World Bank, e-government is the use of IT and the Internet by government institutions to transform relations with citizens, businesspeople, and other government institutions to improve public services, government-business and industry relations, and community participation in government management. Integration, interactivity, and digital coding are in new media. A country implements e-government because it believes that using information technology in government management would 1) improve public services. 2) increase the openness and accountability. 3) decreasing government transaction costs, communication, and interactions. 4) improving community-based information. 5) Strategic PR now has a digital media strategy. Thus, it can create and enhance PR goods and programmes at an institution or agency.

Li & Shang (2020) proposed a chain model of the quality of e-government services, perceived value, citizen value, and intention of reuse. The chain model of e-government service quality, perceived value, and citizen continuous use intention takes a means-end approach and integrates several e-government service quality evaluation models to examine the relationship between government website service quality, perceived value, and citizen reuse intention. From a survey of 1,650 citizen users in a direct-controlled municipality and four high-population cities in China, the study verifies the formative structure of the quality of e-government services



using PLS analysis and tests the proposed concept model using structural equation modelling. Their study focusses on citizens, who are the primary users of government websites, but commercial, nonprofit, and public sector organisations are all important e-government target groups.

El-Kasim & Idid (2017) found that social networks allow organisations and the public to retain interactions. Social media's impact on organisational-public relationships was not studied on a theoretical continuum. Thus, the impact of social networks on the PR of developing countries is unknown. This research used the technology acceptance model (TAM). The use of social networks by PR professionals was judged by Perceived Mutual Relationship, which is based on trust, commitment, and satisfaction. PR professionals were randomly sampled. SEM was used to analyse the Model. TAM explained why practitioners used social networks to improve public relations. The proven model gives public relations academics a theoretical framework to study how social media could promote mutual interactions between PR practitioners, their employers, and target publics.

In a time when many nations prioritise AI, Samsurijan et al. (2022) examined the impact of AI on urban services in Malaysia. The methodology involved reviewing and analysing official documents like Structure Plan and Government Transformation Programme Policy Document covering various levels of cities in Malaysia, articles by researchers on urban growth in Malaysia, and the Federal Department of Town and Country Planning's Urban Development Bulletin from 1957 to the present. The findings are intriguing because municipal authorities have carefully planned the influence of AI on urban service from colonial times. Global digital technology affects AI upgrades in Malaysian urban services. The urban population's IT literacy affects AI's success in municipal services. These developments defined a conceptual city. The findings are based solely on literature review. One reason was to fill the gap in reviewed publications on AI and urban services in underdeveloped nations using Malaysia as a case study.

Yang et al. (2015) tested the proposed scale for evaluating organisation-public dialogic communication (OPDC) to show the link between trust/distrust between organizations and their publics. An empirical study of OPDC Relationships between publics are sometimes



described as mutual dependency or interrelatedness, as a group facing a common challenge must find common ground. Public relations has extensively discussed dialogic communication, or dialogue, but little research has measured organisation-public discourse. The test of the organisation-public dialogic communication scale was the main goal. This study also sought to show how dialogic communication affects public trust in companies. Data were collected using two anonymous online surveys for research. American consumers were randomly selected from a representative panel of online survey panel (N=704). The results showed that the two-factor 28-item OPDC scale was valid and trustworthy. For further empirical validation, this study demonstrated that the proposed OPDC scale is significantly related to public trust and distrust. Given the lack of empirical research on OPDC, this study can inform the research on communication management research.

Heide & Falkheimer (2014) suggest that strategic communication, a transboundary term captures the complex phenomenon of an organisation's targeted communication operations in modern society better than public relations. This article has two goals. First, to characterise and reflect Sweden's public relations education and research evolution and institutionalisation. Transboundary shifts in industry, education, and research suggest that strategic communication is a more legitimate and relevant conceptual and holistic framework than public relations. Strategic communication also incorporates organisational (internal) communication, management theory, and marketing, helping us understand, explain, and critique modern communication processes within and between organisations and society. This article first examines the growth and institutionalisation of public relations education and research in Sweden. I propose strategic communication as a conceptual and holistic framework that better represents an organisation's complex communication phenomenon than standard, boundary-maintaining ideas. Regardless, transparency must be managed carefully. The study used only secondary data.

### **Research Methodology**

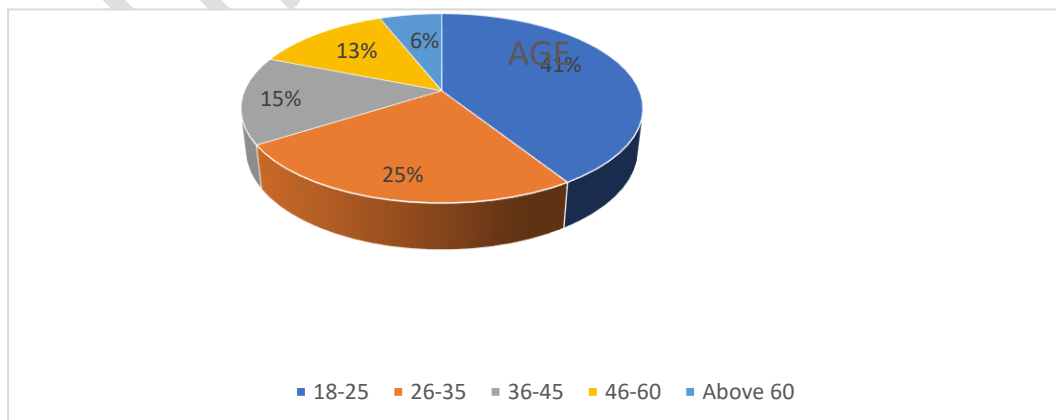
Surveys are essential for gathering quantitative data from a large sample, facilitating a systematic and objective analysis of attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions. This study employed a structured survey methodology, utilizing questionnaires with multiple-choice questions to ensure consistency in data collection. A random selection of approximately 100

respondents was surveyed, covering diverse demographics such as education levels, occupations, and income groups. The use of a quantitative approach ensured statistical reliability and generalizability, allowing for precise measurement and comparison of responses. By adopting this structured methodology, the study effectively captured public perspectives while minimizing biases. The numerical data obtained enabled comprehensive statistical analysis, supporting objective conclusions and trend identification. This method provided clear, quantifiable insights into societal attitudes, reinforcing the validity and reliability of findings. The emphasis on random sampling further enhanced inclusivity, ensuring the results accurately represented a broad population segment for meaningful interpretation.

### Results:

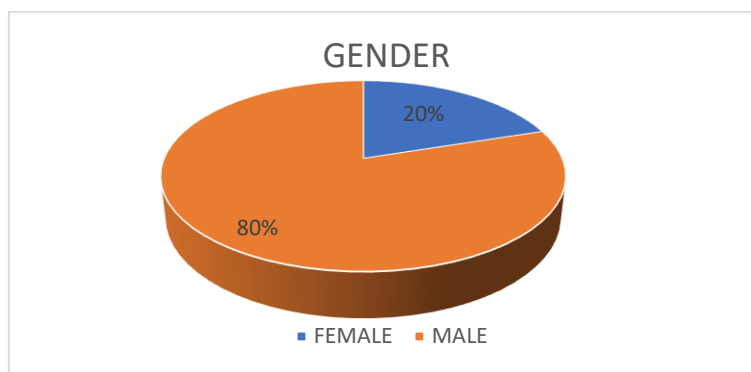
The survey included fundamental demographic questions covering age, gender, education level, occupation, and monthly household income. Additionally, further inquiries were designed to evaluate the effectiveness of various tools in communicating government messages. The objective was to assess how well these PR strategies reach and engage the public across different demographic groups. By analyzing these factors, the study aimed to identify gaps in outreach and suggest improvements for better dissemination of government information. Understanding the impact of these tools on different segments of society provides valuable insights into optimizing communication strategies for broader public awareness and engagement.

#### 1. The respondents' range in age from teenagers to senior citizens.



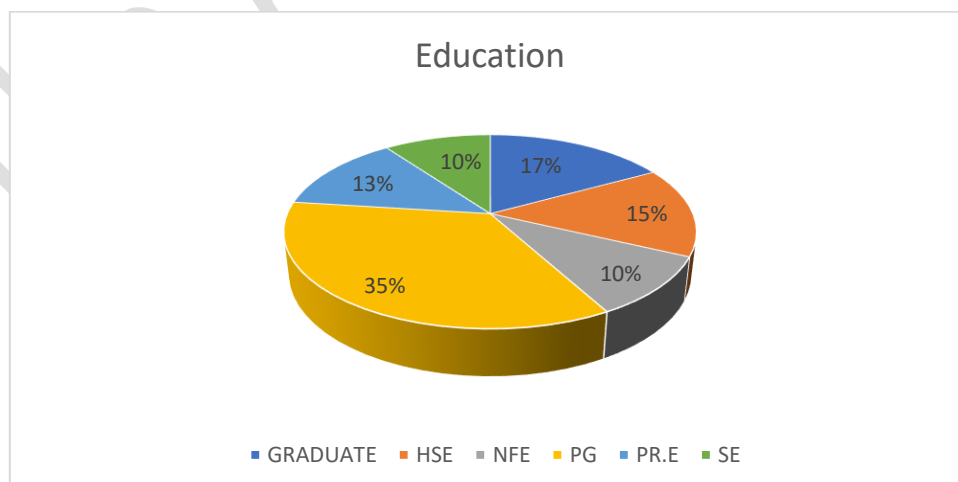
**Interpretation and Observation:** The pie chart illustrates the age distribution of the respondents in the study. The majority, 41%, fall within the 18-25 age group, followed by 25% in the 26-35 age range. Additionally, 15% of respondents belong to the 36-45 age group, while 6% are above 60 years old.

## 2. The respondents' gender distribution on average



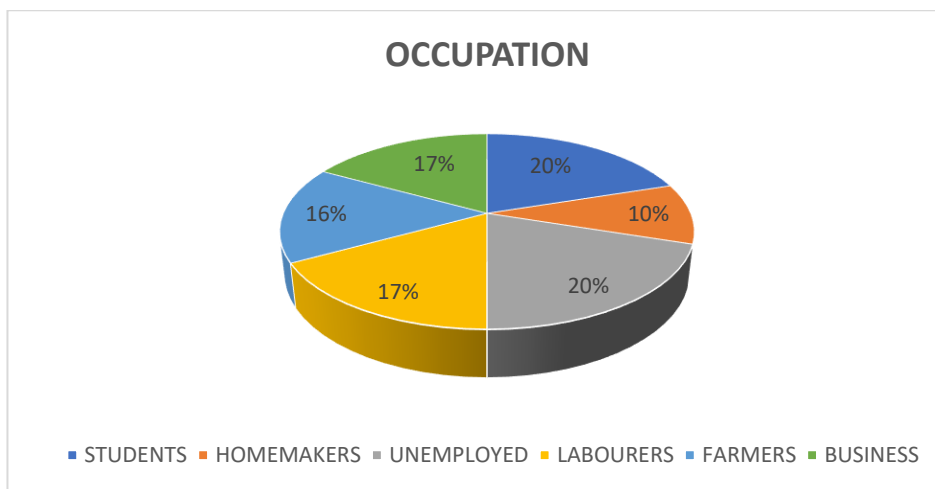
**Interpretation and Observation:** The pie chart represents the gender distribution of the respondents, with 80% being male and 20% being female.

## 3. The respondents' education levels range from primary education to postgraduate studies.



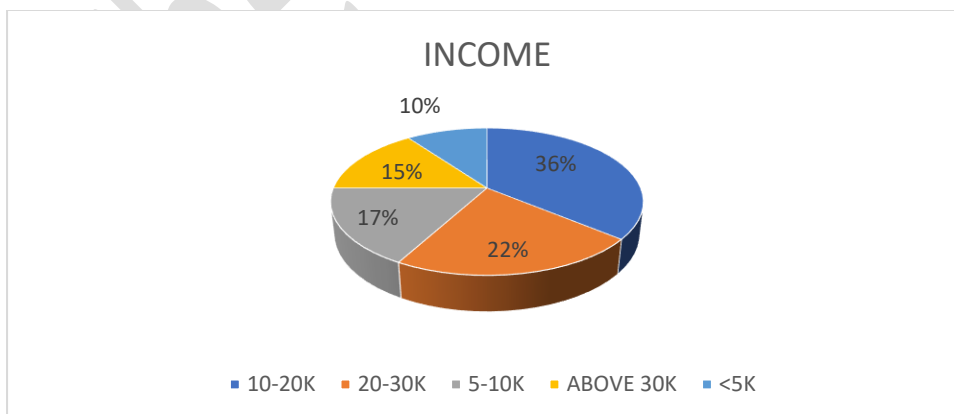
**Interpretation and Analysis:** The pie chart illustrates the educational background of the respondents, showing that 17% are graduates, while 15% have completed higher secondary education. Additionally, 10% have no formal education, 35% hold a postgraduate degree, 13% have attended primary school, and 10% have completed secondary education.

**4. The respondents' occupations vary widely, ranging from students to business professionals.**



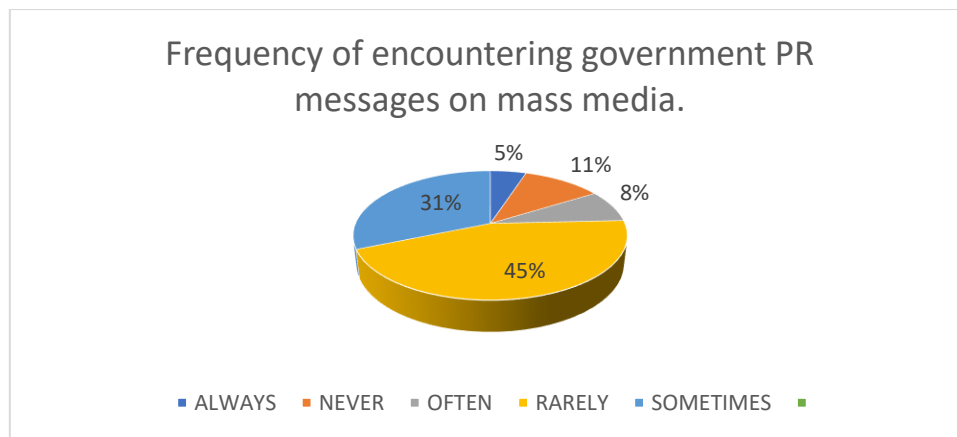
**Interpretation and Observation:** Among the 100 respondents, 20% are students, while another 20% consists of unemployed individuals. Laborers and business professionals each account for 17% of the respondents. Additionally, 16% are farmers, and 10% are homemakers.

**5. The survey assessed the respondents' monthly household income.**



**Interpretation and Observation:** The pie chart illustrates that 36% of respondents have an income ranging between 10,000 and 20,000, while 22% fall within the 20,000 to 30,000 range. Additionally, 17% earn between 5,000 and 10,000, whereas only 15% have an income exceeding 30,000. Meanwhile, 10% of respondents earn below 5,000.

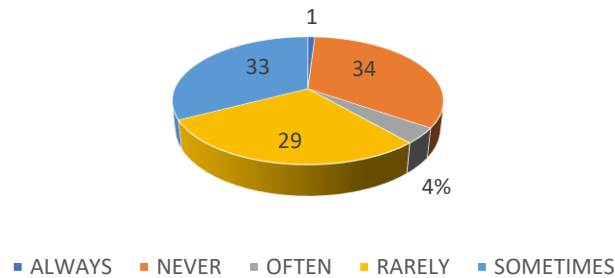
#### 6. How often do you encounter government PR messages on mass media?



**Interpretation and Observation:** When asked about the frequency of encountering government PR messages through media channels such as TV, radio, newspapers, and social media, only 5% of respondents reported always seeing them. In contrast, 11% stated they had never come across such messages, while 8% encountered them often. Additionally, 44% mentioned they rarely came across these messages, and 31% reported seeing them occasionally.

#### 7. Frequency of attending government organised events.

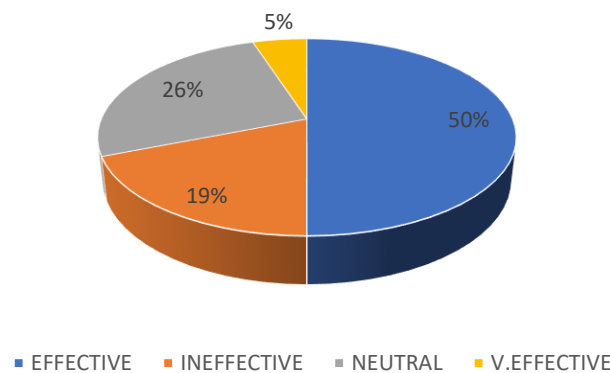
Frequency of attending government organised events.



**Interpretation and Observation:** When asked about their frequency of attending government-organized special events such as camps, fairs, and exhibitions, 34% of respondents stated that they never participated, while 29% mentioned attending rarely. Additionally, 33% reported attending occasionally, 4% attended infrequently, and only 1% consistently participated in such events.

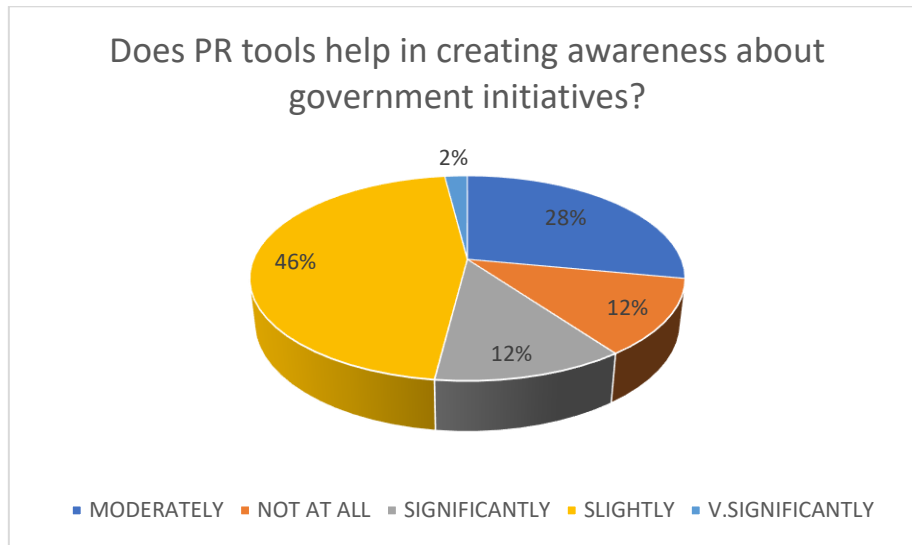
**8. Is media and special events effective in capturing attention?**

Is media and special events effective in capturing attention?



**Interpretation and Observation:** When asked about the effectiveness of media elements and special events in capturing their attention, 50% of respondents found them effective, while 19% considered them ineffective. Additionally, 26% remained neutral on the matter, and 5% regarded them as highly effective.

**9. Does PR tools help in creating awareness about government initiatives?**



**Interpretation and Observation:** In response to the question regarding the effectiveness of PR tools in raising awareness about government initiatives, 28% of respondents stated that their impact was moderate. Meanwhile, 12% felt that these tools did not contribute to awareness at all, whereas another 12% found them significantly helpful. Additionally, 46% of participants believed PR tools had a slight impact, and only 2% considered them highly significant in creating awareness.

### Findings:

A survey was conducted among 100 respondents from Karnataka, representing a diverse demographic in terms of age, gender, education, occupation, and income, to assess the effectiveness of public relations (PR) tools in disseminating government messages. The findings indicate that 45% of the respondents rarely come across government PR messages through various media channels, while only 5% consistently encounter them via television, radio, newspapers, or social media. Additionally, event participation remains low, with merely 1% having attended government-organized events, while 34% never participate in such initiatives. Despite these figures, PR tools demonstrate moderate effectiveness in engaging the public, particularly during special events, with 50% of respondents acknowledging their impact and 5% considering them highly effective. Moreover, 46% of participants believe PR strategies have contributed to raising awareness about government initiatives, with 2% deeming them highly significant in this regard.



### **Conclusion:**

The survey results highlight both the challenges and opportunities in the effectiveness of public relations (PR) tools in disseminating government messages in Karnataka. A significant portion of respondents—45%—rarely encounter government PR messages, indicating a need for broader outreach and more strategic communication efforts. The low levels of engagement with government-organized events, with only 1% attending, further emphasize the necessity for more appealing and accessible initiatives.

Despite these limitations, the findings also reveal areas of promise. Half of the respondents acknowledge the impact of PR tools, particularly during special events, suggesting that when executed effectively, these strategies can enhance public engagement. Additionally, 46% recognize PR efforts as a contributing factor to raising awareness of government initiatives, underscoring their potential role in information dissemination.

To maximize the effectiveness of PR-driven communication, the government should refine its strategies by leveraging diverse media platforms, strengthening outreach, and increasing interactive initiatives. By doing so, public awareness and participation can be significantly improved.

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