

PUBLIC RELATIONS ON THE WEB:
AN OVERVIEW OF PROJECTION OF CORPORATE IDENTITY ONLINE, ITS EFFECTS ON
PUBLIC PERCEPTION, AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

by
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ABSTRACT

JESUS MEZA LUEZA. Public Relations on the Web: An Overview of Projection of Corporate Identity Online, Its Effect on Public Perception, and Its Potential for Two-way Communication
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This study presents an analysis of corporate identity, public relations and corporate Web sites. The study followed a threefold path to examine the ways in which: (a) global corporations project their identity through the Web; (b) two-way communication online can take place between those organizations and their publics; and (c) corporate Web sites affect publics' perceptions. This dissertation reports the results of both a content analysis of corporate Web sites of the 2001 Fortune 500 Global list; and a qualitative analysis aimed at analyzing participants' perceptions of some corporate Web-sites' identity. This study found that 99.4 % of global corporations have a Web page. Findings suggest that global corporations have been using the Web only partially in their efforts to project their corporate identity, although three identity elements presented a better quality of projection than others: name/logo (96.9 %), institutional color (91.9 %), and icon/symbol (73.1 %). Global corporations' Web sites addressed mass media (90.5 %), investors (89.2 %), and customers (82.9 %) as their most important publics. Seventy percent of global corporations have included a communication feature in their Web sites' home page. Among those organizations, 33.5 % performed a two-way communication. The absence, presence, and quality of projection of the corporate identity elements affected participants' perceptions toward the Web sites and their actual organizations. When those elements were absent, participants had a more unfavorable perception of the site. On the other hand, when those elements were present, participants had different reactions, attitudes, and opinions, according to the quality of projection of those identity elements and their previous perception of the organization.