

## Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana students' understanding of public relations profession: A phenomenology

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**Abstract** There have been various definitions of the Public Relation profession related to its purposes since its birth in the 1960s. The current research investigated is the meaning of the Public Relations profession for Public Relations students at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana who, in the future, would work as Public Relations. This research was conducted using qualitative methods and a phenomenological approach. Three findings were presented in this article. First, the construction of the Public Relation profession depends on the body of knowledge, the ability to communicate and build relationships with the community, be creative, and have an attractive appearance. Second, the meaning of the Public Relation profession is constructed based on four references, namely the media and the surrounding community, materials and classes in higher education, from practitioners and developments in information technology. Third, the construction of the identity of the Public Relations profession through online shopping to improve self-image, obtain information on fashion developments, and the ability to select products selectively.

**Keywords:** public relations students; Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana; online shopping; public relations profession

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## INTRODUCTION

Public Relations activity emerged when Ivy Lee, a son of an American nobleman, had an idea to solve the conflict between the coal worker and the industrialist. Ivy Lee worked as a journalist and was looking for a solution to a worker strike problem that occurred in the United States at that time (Hairunnisa, 2015: 3). Lee argued that a Public Relations officer is obliged to ensure fair news coverage, especially during the company's critical time. A Public Relations officer is also expected to create and maintain a good relationship with workers, outsiders, and, most importantly, the mass media. (Jefkins, 1992). The event that occurred in 1906 became the starting point for Public Relations activity transformation into a profession.

According to Behrman (in Tsetsura, 2014), the profession is not similar to professionals. Some criteria were must-have for certain occupations, such as knowledge for a specific field, license, etc. Furthermore, Behrman (1998 in Tsetsura, 2014) identified several criteria for 'professions': "a shaped, recognised body of knowledge, a selective process or entry, and testing and licensing. In other words, access to any real job (e.g., medicine, law, and even some trades such as cosmetology) is control" (p. 88). Meanwhile, Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg (2012) in "*This is Public Relations; The Realities of Public Relations*," mentioned that one criterion that a profession should have is that "command over a body of knowledge" (p. 89).

Referring to Behrman and Newsom, like any other profession, Public Relations also has several criteria. Summing up Lee's argument, there are at least four criteria that the Public Relations profession must-have. First, Public Relations must have the knowledge and ability to ensure fair reporting, especially at critical times of the company; second, they must build good relations with workers, outsiders and the mass media; third, Public Relations is in the top management chain; lastly, giving authority to Public Relations to disseminate factual and essential information to the public. Lee made these criteria based on his involvement in solving coal industry problems. Lee's idea was called the "Declarations of Principle," which implied that public existence could not be ignored by industrial management and considered insignificant by the press (Hairunnisa, 2015: 3).

Lee's criteria for the profession of Public Relations is different from the Indonesian situation. During the *Konvensi Nasional Perhumas* (Public Relations National Convention) in 1994, Harmoko, Minister of Information at the time and Alwi Dahlan suggested three criteria of Public Relations as a profession: specific educational standards, license, and appearance standards. On the other hand, based on Hiebert's (an American communication scholar) argument, Dahlan argued that the need for a body of knowledge, sufficient standard and code of conduct, and control toward the profession are the primary indicators for the profession. However, both of them did not acknowledge whether the 'body of knowledge' is present in the Indonesian Public Relations educational curriculum. In reality, the

educational background of Public Relations practitioners in Indonesia varied, from the Bachelor of Computer Science to medical graduate (Putra in Putra, 2008). On the other side, that education and professional publications influence how people perceive their chosen field of work (Taylor & Kent, 2010).

Differences in opinion from experts about the criteria of the Public Relations profession resulted in the variances in the meaning of the job itself. Public relations continues to be an emerging field of study with no consensus definition of its boundaries, changing nature, or theoretical underpinnings embraced by both scholars and practitioners (p. 2) (Curtin, 2011; Edwards, 2011; Greenwood, 2010; L'Eang in Thurlow, 2018). Several studies have shown that there are differences in the criteria for the Public Relations profession in several agencies and companies that cause differences in the meaning of this Public Relations profession.

Baiq Vira Safitri, Iriana Bakti, and Hanny Hafiar in "*Hospital Public Relations Profession: Between Professionalism and Humanism*" explained that Public Relations officers in hospitals conduct the Public Relations profession (in this paper referred to as 'Public Relations') based on their perspective and assessment. The 2019 research resulted in a mapping of the meaning of the hospital's Public Relations profession based on several perspectives. First, through the definition of Public Relations, second, the characteristics of Public Relations work of the hospital's Public Relations officers, and third, the achievement of Public Relations who are the main target of hospital public relations officers. The Fourth is the difference between hospital Public Relations and Public Relations of other companies, fifth, the advantages of hospital public relations, and finally sixth, the impact of being a hospital's Public Relations (Safitri et al., 2019).

The results of that research indicate that Public Relation is defined differently in different hospitals. 'Hospital A' defines Public Relations from the definition of Public Relations viewpoint. In contrast, 'Hospital B' interprets the Public Relations profession from the characteristics of Public Relations work. Conversely, 'Hospital C' and 'Hospital D' also have their own definition of the Public Relations profession. On the other hand, goals are the basis of communication which is formed from a series of processes to construct meaning. The construction of meaning begins with the experience of hospital public relations officers as the main object of study in phenomenological research (Safitri et al., 2019). Therefore, Safitri et al. focused on the meaning of Public Relations in hospitals based on the definitions, characteristics, achievements, differences, and advantages.

Another study explored the meaning of Public Relations based on gender. Tsetsura in "*Constructing Public Relations as a Woman's Profession in Russia*" argued that the Public Relations profession is socially constructing. She indicated that the Public Relations profession is more suitable for women than men. Tsetsura argued that

*the results of this study have demonstrated that this socially constructed profession is a profession that is better suited for women than for men. This notion already has helped to*

*constitute public relations as a women's profession in Russia, a country in which this field is still young (Tsetsura, 2014, 85).*

This result signifies that Public Relations is identical with women; thus, the criteria and meaning of the Public Relations profession are also closely related to women. A brochure, titled "*Careers for women in the '70s,*" opined that public relations offer excellent career prospects for women with a college degree (US Department of Labor, 1973). More than four decades later, public relations and other associated roles are still considered most suitable for women (Lillie et al., 2020).

Other research by Damayanti & Saputro (2017) also defined the Public Relations profession and the Public Relations criteria from the gender perspective. In the 2017 study, Damayanti and Saputro found the requirements and meaning of the Public Relations profession from the Masculine and Feminine perspective. The results of this study indicate that the public relations profession in private companies tends to be masculine rather than feminine. On the other hand, the hotel industry places the Public Relations profession as a feminine-oriented profession, in accordance with hospitality values. This research also found indications of the masculine values in the private sector and feminine ones in the hotel industry sector due to the structure of the dimensions of Indonesia's national culture as a masculine nation in terms of corporate identity, company needs, company policies, and management preferences (Damayanti & Saputro, 2017).

Thus, it can be concluded that the criteria and definition of the Public Relations profession can be viewed from various points of view. Ivy Lee sees the requirements of the Public Relations profession in terms of authority and duties. Safitri et al. argue that the definition and the tasks determine the meaning of the Public Relations profession in the hospital. At the same time, Tsetsura and Novita defined the Public Relations profession from a gender perspective. On the other hand, researchers and public relations experts still have many meanings and criteria related to the definition and measurement of the Public Relations profession. Bowen (2009) said that "Perhaps the failure of public relations to hold professional standards and therefore be generally recognised as a profession is part of the problem is a lack of credibility for the field" (p. 403). Meanwhile, according to Ihlen & Ruler (2007):

methodological roots heavily influence one's perspective on what public relations is, how it works, and how it should be researched.

That is why it is crucial to make these roots explicit (p. 24).

Pieczka (in Katerina Tsetsura, 2014) argued that in the discussions of the Public Relations profession, the views and opinions of professionals and professional organisations are critical. In connection with this Public Relations profession, Pieczka stated that "when discussing public relations, discursive representations of the profession by professionals and professional organisations should be considered" (p. 90).

The meaning of the Public Relations profession is also continually changing, especially with the development of information technology. The

development of technology influences the culture that exists in society. Meanwhile, the culture in society shapes the understanding of the community related to the Public Relations profession. L'Eang (in Amy Thurlow, 2018) argues that "the term public relations is not a neutral technical term, but a concept that connotes different meanings in different cultural contexts" (p. 1).

Referring to L'Eang's, the development of information technology in today's society created an impact on the criteria and meaning of the Public Relations profession in the Indonesian community. The development of communication technology is a necessity in the world of Public Relations. Information technology through the internet, social media, and other applications have an essential role in every Public Relations activity. It can be used by public relations professionals to widen conversations in social media, to convey appealing organisational messages, and to attract brand fans to share ideas and content (Valentini, 2015). In e-Public Relations, information technology takes a role in every Public Relations activity, starting from its involvement when creating a Public Relations program, to the media relations activities. At this time, Public relations scholars and practitioners are aware that social media is changing the Public Relations industry and increasingly playing an essential role in the business planning process (Allagui & Breslow, 2016). According to a 2007 PRSA "*Wired for Change Survey*," the majority of public relations professionals' state that the use of communication technology has made their job easier by expediting the circulation of information to reach broader audiences. Social media not only allows public relations practitioners to reach out to and engage their publics in conversation but also provides an avenue to strengthen media relations (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008, p. 412)

Through social media, the internet has a role in building the image of a company or organisation and building the identity of its Public Relations. On the other side, (Allagui & Breslow, 2016) said that "the effective use of social media in Public Relations campaigns can generate conversion, facilitate brand positioning, and maintain continued brand sustenance" (p. 20). Knowing how a Public Relations could shape their identity for the public will undoubtedly be necessary because personal identity will affect the self-image as well as the institutions in which they occupied. Charles Horton Cooley, through his looking-glass-self theory, explained in detail about the concept of self that occurs in each individual. This concept is based on the idea of a person imagining one's image through the perceptions of other people, especially significant others (Umiarso, 2014).

Referring to Cooley's opinion, the criteria and meaning of the Public Relations profession cannot be separated from self-image. The Public Relations profession is a profession that is always associated with clients, the public, and the media. The job of building relationships with many parties leads to a consequence regarding the appearance. People who work as a Public Relations are required to be good looking and attractive,

to construct their self-image and the institutions where they work. A person's self-image cannot be separated from how he looks, dresses, behaves and interacts with his environment. In our society, self-image cannot be separated from the clothes worn by the Public Relations official. This concept is present in Javanese's philosophy of "*Ajining diri saka kedaling lathi, ajining sarira dumunung ing busana*" which means that a person's self-esteem lies in his words, from what comes out of his tongue. While "*Ajining Sarira dumunung ing busana*" means that one will be respected based on what one wears, based on what is socially acceptable. The flexible way of dressing will make it easy for someone to get along with people from all walks of life. This Javanese philosophy is also applicable in the world of Public Relations. The image and self-concept of a Public Relations are greatly influenced by the way they talk (*kedaling lathi*) and the way they dress (*dumunung ing busana*). Trisnawati (2016) argued that by showing the way they look, both the attitudes and how to dress (colour, trend, harmony, and accessories), people can show their taste.

Many ways are used by Public Relations to build self-image through appearance. With current technological developments, one of the ways that people who work as Public Relations to complete their appearance is by shopping online. Online shopping is one of the changes brought about by the internet in terms of shopping innovation. Online shopping becomes an impressive space to freely present a self-image according to the wishes of its users.

Regarding the criteria and meaning of Public Relations, from Ivy Lee's time to the present, there has been no mutual agreement. Moreover, the development of culture and technology that has a significant influence on the current performance of Public Relations will also change the criteria and meaning of Public Relations. These changes include the criteria given by experts, researchers to practitioners, criteria, and definitions of the Public Relations profession. In 2015, Public Relations professionals highly evaluated three indicators of professionalisation, namely formal education, ideology and ethical principles for the good of society, and bodies of academic or scientific knowledge. However, they are less optimistic about the functional status of Public Relations in organisations and markets. Moreover, respondents were unsure about the existence of professional associations that bring together professionals for everyone's benefit (Molleda, Moreno, & Navarro, 2017, p. 1091).

The question then is, what are the criteria and meaning of the Public Relations profession for students who are studying Public Relations? Understanding the criteria and objectives of the Public Relations profession from the point of view of a Public Relations student is interesting to study because these students will work as Public Relations in government and private agencies in the future. Different understanding of Public Relations students on, for example, the understanding of the Public Relations profession will lead to different meanings and criteria. As a result, when

these students will later work as Public Relations, they will focus on doing Public Relations tasks according to their perceptions.

Based on these problems, this article aimed to understand how Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana public relations students understand the public relations profession. This study mapped the knowledge of Public Relations students about the criteria and meaning of the Public Relations profession. We intended to provide a better understanding of the Public Relations profession to Public Relations students and the wider community as well as offer a better explanation of the criteria and meaning of the Public Relations profession in a broader context.

## METHODOLOGY

The problems in this paper were analysed using qualitative methods and phenomenological approaches. In this study, the understanding of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students about the Public Relations profession was constructed based on their daily experiences as candidates for the profession. Construction was also based on their experience in building identity and self-concept through social interaction, appearance, technology, and ways of supporting appearance. One of the technologies used to support appearance is Instagram which functions as an online store. To obtain this data, researchers must dig in-depth data without reduction or isolation of specific variables to obtain complete data that is comprehensively explained (Andhika & Nur, 2017). The informants in this study were six Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students year 2016 and 2017 who were selected based on specific criteria. The six informants are presented in the following table:

**Table 1. Informant Identity**

No.	Informant	Education	Age	Hometown
1	EI	Public Relation Student of 2017 class	20 years old	Semarang
2	GW	Public Relation Student of 2017 class	20 years old	Bekasi
3	RT	Public Relation Student of 2017 class	21 years old	Salatiga
4	FM	Public Relation Student of 2016 class	22 years old	Timika
5	JJ	Public Relation Student of 2017 class	21 years old	Pemalang
6	AL	Public Relation Student of 2017 class	20 years old	Cilacap

Source: The result of the author's study (2020)

Researchers made conclusions based on data obtained by observations and interviews. Participants in this study were several students of the Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations study program. After obtaining data on students' understanding of the

profession, criteria, and meaning of the Public Relations profession, the researcher made a classification.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Identity Construction of Public Relations**

The meaning of the Public Relations profession from Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations student's perspective can be seen from the construction of the Public Relations profession. Castells (in Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel, 2012) stated that identity is an integral part of human lives. Personality plays a central role in all human activities that function as the source of self-definition. Identity defines who we are and how we are from society's perspective and even represents our views. Identity is people's source of meaning and experience:

we know of no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinction between self and other, we and they, are not made.... Self-knowledge – always a construction no matter how much it feels like a discovery – is never altogether separable from claims to be known in specific ways by others (Castells, 2004:6).

Through identity, people will find out who they are, where they come from, and how they must act and respond to their surroundings. In other words, identity becomes a source of meaning for a person based on his own experience with himself and his experience with the world around him. Weedon (2004) said that identity is a limit of an individual or a group when they understand who they are. In Weedon's (2004) understanding:

identity is perhaps best understood as a limited and temporary fixing for individuals of a particular mode of subjectivity as apparently what one is. One of the vital ideological roles of identity is to curtail the plural possibilities of subjectivity inherent in the wider discursive field and to give individuals a singular sense of who they are and where they belong (p. 17).

The definition of identity must be understood in a clear context, which must be distinguished, whether it is a role or an identity. Its objectives are strongly influenced by the norms set by the institution or organisation. This statement is in accordance with the arguments of Castells (2004):

identity must be distinguished from what, traditionally, sociologists have called roles and roles sets. Functions defined by norms structured by the institutions and organisations of society. Their relative weight in influencing people's behaviour depends upon negotiations and arrangements between individuals and these institutions and organisations (p. 6).



In the construction of the Public Relations profession, its identity is different from the role it must play. Identity is a reliable source of meaning because there is a process of self-construction in this context. It regulates meaning, whereas role regulates function. Castells (2004) said that, "identities are stronger sources of meaning than roles because of the process of self-constructions and that they involve. Identities organise the meaning, while roles organise the functions" (p. 7).

On the other hand, the identity that is built can also come from the dominant institution or organisation. Referring to Castells' (2004) opinion, the identity of an individual originating from a dominant institution affect the internalisation process of that individual: "identities can also originate from dominant institutions, and they become identities only when and if social actors internalise them and construct their meaning around this internalisation" (p. 7). Jonnatan Fawkes also expressed his views on imaginary identity at the individual, organisational and national levels. Identity consists of a circuit of 'moments' composed of representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation that offers a robust model of interrelated, ongoing, process-based communication with a strong foundation and implications for public relations (Fawkes, 2012).

Based on this background, the study of the identity construction of the Public Relations profession from the point of view of public relations students is essential. Especially if we consider the possibility that students from the Public Relations study program will work as Public Relations after graduating. The formation of the identity of the Public Relations profession by the Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students may not be based on the role of Public Relations but based on the meaning given to the profession. From the results of observations and in-depth interviews with several students, the researcher found several constructs from the Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations Study Program students to identify the Public Relations profession.

First is the ability to communicate. Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students view the Public Relations profession as a communication activity that aims to build the right organisational image. Students consider that communication skills are fundamental in Public Relations work for someone who is in that field. The ability to communicate can build a bridge between Public Relations and the community to build a harmonious relationship. In their article, "*Toward a dialogic theory of Public Relations,*" Kent & Taylor (2002) reflects on the emphasis on managing communication as a focus on communicating to negotiate relationships that last over time. The role of reciprocal communication in today's companies is essential. Usually, the person in charge of this relationship is the Public Relations profession. That is, Public Relations need to have the ability to carry out its functions and duties in conducting communication relations internally and externally.

According to Shanon dan Weaver (Wahyuningsih, 2014), communication is a form of human interaction that intentionally or unintentionally influences one another. Communication is not limited to

verbal communication, but also facial expressions, art, and technology. Communication in organisations, institutions, companies and universities exists and has become a necessity. The Public Relations profession, in this case, is a communication activity that aims to build a company's good image. Therefore, in carrying out all of its roles and activities, someone who works as a Public Relations must be able to communicate verbally and in writing.

Referring to the opinion of Cultip and Center in his book "*Public Relations Company*," the Public Relations profession is a communication activity in an honest effort to foster common interests in order to create a harmonious relationship between the organisation concerned and the community (Prayudi, 2012). This is in line with the statement of the informant GW (informant 1): "public speaking skills can support careers in the field of Public Relations, both for promotional activities and in building communication to solve problems of a company with the public" (GW, 26 October 2019).

In addition to supporting Public Relations work, public speaking skills also help Public Relations convey their intentions and solve company problems with the public. RT (informant 2) added that the communication skills possessed by Public Relations are very crucial so that the Public Relations profession can communicate what an organisation wants to the public to form a good image of the organisation in the public eye: "someone who works in Public Relations must have communication skills and a communication program. The goal is to communicate the purpose of the organisation to the public to form the organisations' image" (RT, 24 October 2019).

In addition to public speaking skills, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students construct the identity of the Public Relations profession in terms of communication facilitators. The Public Relations profession is built as a communicator who creates two-way and reciprocal communication between companies and the public to create specific goals. This is in accordance with RT's opinion that "the company brand can be built if the public relations in the company can communicate the company's intention to the public space" (RT, 24 October 2019). According to informant 2, the Public Relations profession is constructed as a communicator who can shape the value and understanding of society. Through communication, Public Relations can develop community perceptions and behaviour in accordance with company goals.

Based on these opinions, communication skills are essential for every Public Relations practitioner. Communication ability consists of communication skills and managerial knowledge. In the context of ability, everyone in the Public Relations profession must have the ability to communicate with anyone, both internal and external. Meanwhile, the managerial ability is the ability to create communication strategies to adapt to audiences so that it has an impact on public opinion. Communication strategies are useful for influencing people based on their beliefs (Maryani & Darmastuti, 2016). In other words, communication

skills and communication strategies are the keys to the success of Public Relations in fostering public trust and forging excellent and harmonious relationships between an organisation and society.

The second is to build a good relationship with the surrounding communities. In addition to communication skills, a person who works in Public Relations is required to have the ability to build good relationships with everyone in his surrounding environments. They must be honest and trustworthy. Both of these characteristics become the basis for building trust and relationships with the internal and external public. FM (informant 3) stated that "a person who works in Public Relations must be friendly and open to people in his environment so that he can build good relationships with others" (FM, 26 October 2019)

According to FM, another characteristic that must be possessed by Public Relations is honesty and reliable. Public Relations must have high credibility. They who works in Public Relations should be reliable and trusted by others. When they provide information to the public, their information must be accurate, reasonable, not fabricated, and accepted. A person in the Public Relations profession should have an honest to create a positive image for oneself and the organisation. GW (informant 1) added that "a person who works in Public Relations must behave according to the atmosphere and circumstances in one's environments so that one knows when to listen and talk" (GW, 26 October 2019).

Based on the three informants' explanation, the identity of the Public Relations profession is constructed in the context of a communicator and a mediator in bridging the interests of the public in general, including government and private institutions. The public relations professionals should be able to accommodate the public's aspirations and pay attention to the wishes of the people, which is considered a necessity and responsibility of a Public Relations practitioner. Referring to the opinion from Effendy (1993), "the function of Public Relations is to foster a harmonious relationship between an organisation and the public, both internally and externally. Fostering relations with public internally and externally has become the responsibility of the Public Relations officers" (GW, 26 October 2019).

Third, Public Relations must be creative. Referring to the results of Public Relations activities research by Wahyuningsih (2014), two significant roles have consistently emerged in Public Relations activities, i.e., the role of a technician and a manager. The purpose of a technician represents the artistic side of Public Relations. In contrast, a manager's role focuses on activities that help organisations identify and solve problems related to Public Relations.

In this study, students of Public Relations of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana constructed the Public Relations identity as a profession that holistically considers capabilities. Someone who works in this profession is required to have extensive knowledge and insight as well as communication skills, be creative in carrying out their duties, and bring up new ideas, especially in the current era of technological development,

creativity, and new ideas. EL (informant 4) conveyed that *“those who work in Public Relations must have broad insight, be able to work together in an organisation (open-minded) and be intelligent and creative to create bright ideas in their workplaces”* (EL, 23 October 2019).

Creativity is considered a necessity in all Public Relations activities, especially how to solve communication problems, the way Public Relations reaches the target public finds practical alternatives and solutions to the challenges set by clients and thus, defines creative ideas in Public Relations as different, original, relevant, imaginative, fresh, and active (Estanyol & Roca, 2015). Knowledge and creativity become an essential factor in the Public Relations profession, especially in the era of disruption where changes are happening so fast, and competition is becoming stronger. Those who work in Public Relations are required to master and utilise technology in the future to build better interaction possibilities and disseminate information faster to wider audiences (Pienrasmi, 2015).

Theoretically, the ability of a person who works in Public Relations consists of the managerial ability in terms of communication and the knowledge of communication technics, as explained earlier. The administrative ability here means an ability to identify issues and problems (expert prescriber), an ability to be a mediator or an ability to facilitate two-way communication between an organisation and the public (communication facilitator), and help leaders solve their problems and oversee the implementation of problem-solving (problem-solving facilitator) (Kriyantono, 2015). RT supports this statement. RT considers that CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) and management crisis are essential points in the works of Public Relations to form a corporate image: *“those who work in Public Relations must master communication, crisis management, and CSR to handle and solve problems properly and wisely”* (RT, 24 October 2019).

In implementing CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), the Public Relations profession has an essential role in the forming of an organisation's image. In this context, a person who works in Public Relations is required to master the use of technology. Related to this, RT stated, *“those in Public Relations must master application designs to support their work programs. They must keep up with technological developments and the use of social media in the workplace”* (RT, 24 October 2019).

The development of information technology is inevitable in the Public Relations profession. Like it or not, those who work in the Public Relations profession must adapt to technology's development. Grunig (2009) stated that the presence of social media had changed the way practitioners think and carry out their practices. It is a revolutionary force in the field of Public Relations (Pienrasmi, 2015). Based on Grunig's opinion, the Public Relations profession must follow technological developments. Mastery of technological-related applications will significantly assist the work of Public Relations and open opportunities for better interaction and faster information to the broader audiences.

Fourth is by having a good appearance. Public Relations profession is a profession that is always in contact with the public. Based on this phenomenon, students of Public Relations of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana constructed the identity of the Public Relations profession related to appearance. They considered that a person who works in the Public Relations profession should always maintain excellent appearance.

According to Hartono, attractive appearance is an essential aspect of the sustainability of a relationship. In other words, a good impression influences the continuity of a relationship. Besides, a positive assessment from another person in a relationship will improve someone's self-image. A functional evaluation from the partner can increase one's self-image (Rakhmat, 1999). This logic was used by students of Public Relations of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, who constructed the identity of the Public Relations profession related to appearance. In their view, a good impression and self-care must be considered because they play an essential role in shaping the self-image of someone who works in Public Relations. Littlejohn and Foss also opined that identity and identification are keys to a process by which people build their orientations toward one another and with the world around them (in Soehoet, 2002).

The construction of a Public Relations profession based on appearance creates a certain standard in terms of presentation among Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students. According to EL, "those who work in Public Relations must have a good appearance. They must look neat and clean; should know how to use makeup; wear formal clothes; wear heels; not use a backpack and can-do hairdressing" (EL, 23 October 2019). Furthermore, RT stated, "a person who works in Public Relations must dress according to his workplace. In the field, formal dresses are not always suitable" (RT, 24 October 2019).

Based on the results of interviews with several informants as well as direct observations, students of the Public Relations study program considered that self-identity the source of meaning, based on their experiences. The process of identity formation does not occur in a vacuum. It is achieved from the surroundings and the interactions with the people around them. At this level, the construction of the identity of the Public Relations profession by students is also inseparable from their personal experiences, dominant institutions and the development of information technology. In their understanding, the Public Relations profession's construction was not based on the roles, but the meaning of the profession. Based on this, the of the Public Relations was constructed as the one that, firstly, can communicate. Secondly, one can build a relationship with the surrounding communities. Thirdly, creative, and fourthly have an excellent appearance.

### **The Meaning of Public Relations Professions Based on Certain References**

Understanding the meaning of the Public Relations profession from the identity construction built by Public Relations Students is essential

because identity becomes the foundation of their purpose and experience. Identity is a cause of meaning created through the individuation process. Castells (2004) stated that "identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves, and by themselves, constructed through a process of individuation" (p. 7). He further elaborates, "the construction of identities uses building materials from history, from geography, from biological, productive, and reproductive institutions, from collective memory and personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and religious revelations (p. 7). In Castells' view, identity construction is based on many factors, including historical, geographical, biological, production and institutional reproduction, collective memory, personal fantasies, and power and religion. Similar construction processes and factors were found in the construction of the Public Relations profession's identity by Public Relations study program students at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana. One of the factors that construct the students' understanding of the Public Relations profession's identity is historical elements. The historical factors may be obtained from books and other references, as well as learning materials. Among the several factors mentioned by Castells, the element of collective memory and personal fantasy plays a vital role in the construction of the Public Relations profession by Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students. The collective memory was obtained from their interactions with Public Relations practitioners who came to their campus as informants of seminars or workshops, as well as through mutual relationships and interactions. Interactions and relationships with practitioners of Public Relations, construct an understanding of the Public Relations profession and shapes personal fantasies about the identity of Public Relations within Public Relations students.

In Hecht' communication theory about identity, he opines that identity is the main link between individuals and society, and communication is a chain so that this relationship occurs (in Littlejohn & Foss, 2012). Students of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations Study Program students know and understand the identity of the Public Relations profession through communication with Public Relations practitioners and from institutions where they study the Public Relations profession. In this context, each Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations Study Program student internalises certain meanings and values and acquires the identity offered to them by Public Relations practitioners and related institutions. Weedon stated, "individual subjects internalise certain meanings and values and take on the identity offered to them by the institutions concerned, for example, workers, mothers or citizens of a particular country" (Weedon, 2004, p.12).

As stated by Castells (2004), the construction of self-identity is shaped by many factors, including historical, geographical, biological, production and institutional factors. Based on these factors, the writer tries to map the meaning of the Public Relations profession from the perspective of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students. Based on observations and in-depth interviews, researchers found that the goals of

the Public Relations profession for Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations Study Program students are grouped based on the references they get. The groupings are; first, the references they obtained from the media and people around them before entering the Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations study program. Second, references from lecture materials during their studies in the Public Relations study program. Third, recommendations from practitioners they met during lectures. Fourth, references from social media and other new media.

### **The meaning of the Public Relations Profession based on references from the mass media and the surrounding community**

Castells refers to "the construction of identity uses the building blocks of history, from geography, from biology, from productive and reproductive institutions, from collective memory and personal fantasy, from the apparatus of power and religious revelation" (Castells, 2004: 7). Based on history, geography, and biology, the meaning of the Public Relations profession in the perspective of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations Study Program students is also determined by its historical and geographic factors. Based on the results of interviews from several sources, the definition of the Public Relations profession before learning about Public Relations is grouped into first, the objectives of the Public Relations profession are closely related to communication, and second, the goals of the Public Relations profession. The profession is synonymous with Marketing, and thirdly, the purpose of the Public Relations profession is identical to office workers (working indoors).

The meaning of the Public Relations profession is closely related to communication. EL, one of the informants from Semarang, in an in-depth interview, said, "the definition of the public relations profession is related to communication using foreign languages" (EL, 23 October 2019). The same thing was conveyed by GW, one of the informants from Bekasi, the public relations profession is synonymous with communication. Therefore, the criteria for the Public Relations profession are having to master communication skills, have foreign language skills, and be able to build good relationships with various parties, either with other employees or with the broader community (GW, 26 October 2019).

RT, one of the informants from Salatiga, explained that the meaning of the Public Relations profession is closely related to communication. According to RT, "public relations profession is a profession that is closely related to communication and interaction with the community. Therefore, everyone who works as a Public Relations must have communication skills and skills, because he has to meet many people" (RT, 24 October 2019). The same thing was also expressed by FM, one of the informants from Timika. According to FM, "a Public Relations practitioner must have good communication skills and public speaking" (FM, 26 October 2019).

In the perspective of the informants, the meaning of the Public Relations profession cannot be separated from communication and interaction, as well as building relationships with the public. In this context, foreign language skills are essential. JJ, one of the informants from Pematang, said, "the meaning of the Public Relations profession is closely related to communication, mastery of foreign languages and interaction with the wider community" (JJ, 28 October 2019). Meanwhile, according to AL, one of the presenters who came from Cilacap, "the meaning of the Public Relations profession is closely related to good and correct communication practices. This profession interacts a lot with the wider community. Therefore, communication is important for Public Relations to build good relationships with Public" (AL, 30 October 2019).

The meaning of the Public Relations profession is identical to Marketing and HR. Before studying in the Public Relations study program, several Public Relations students interpreted that the Public Relations profession was identical to Marketing and Human Resources, as RT said, "the definition of the Public Relations profession is closely related to the company's marketing activities" (RT, 24 October 2019). On the other hand, a different opinion was conveyed by JJ. In an in-depth interview, JJ said, "the Public Relations profession is synonymous with HRD (Human Resources Development) or a spokesperson" (JJ, 28 October 2019).

### **The meaning of the Public Relations Profession based on references from college.**

After studying in the Public Relations study program and gaining knowledge about Public Relations, several informants began to change their views when interpreting the Public Relations profession. According to some professional informants, public relations remains synonymous with communication. However, the student opinion about this communication is more profound. Communication is not only knowledge but also a skill. Communication is not only in the context of direct contact but also in communication using the media and even in communication with other institutions. According to EL,

the meaning of the Public Relations profession has a lot to do with communication. The Public Relations profession must have communication skills. The Public Relations profession is synonymous with building relationships with the public, with the media and the wider community. Therefore, the Public Relations profession is closely related to communication actions to create awareness (EL, 23 October 2019 ).

From EL's perspective, the communication referred to here is a skill that must be possessed by a Public Relations because Public Relations must build relationships with the audience, the media, and the wider community. Unlike EL, GW believes that the communication skills needed by someone who is a Public Relations professional are Public Speaking. According to GW, "The ability of a Public Relations in terms of Public Speaking is useful for solving problems that occur in the company and is



very necessary when a Public Relations practitioner conveys the company's intentions to the public" (GW, 26 October 2019).

Slightly different from EL, FM views that the communication skills possessed by a Public Relations practitioner are needed to build relationships with the public. In in-depth interviews with researchers, FM stated that

public relations must have the ability to communicate, especially in terms of public speaking and mastery of foreign languages. This is very necessary when Public Relations has to build good relations with internal and external parties. In this section, someone who works as a Public Relationship can build trust with the public" (FM, 26 October 2019).

Based on the opinions of several informants above, the definition of communication in the Public Relations profession consists of knowledge and skills. Experience is at the level of concepts and theories related to communication, while power is the ability and expertise of public relations to communicate. The skills needed are communication with the public and the media to build relationships, public speaking, and finally, communicate correctly and adequately. JJ said this, "a Public Relations is not only able to communicate but must master good and correct ways of communicating as a Public Relations practitioner" (JJ, 28 October 2019). Modern Public Relations practitioners manage relationships and ultimately persuade the public by maintaining an open dialogue with multiple stakeholders (Porter, 2010, p. 128).

Regarding the ability to build relationships, building relationships with the media can be done in various ways. They started from making releases, gathering with the media, to making media events. AL, one of the informants in this paper, said, "a Public Relations practitioner must also be able to make the right press release to build relations with the media and educate the public" (AL, 30 October 2019). Curtin & Rhodenbaugh (2001, p. 179) said, "Critics have accused Public Relations practitioners of providing material to journalists that promote environmental backlash agendas and have no news value." Therefore, the information provided to the media must be correct.

The definition of the Public Relations profession is related to the abilities it has. According to several informants in this study, several criteria must be possessed in the Public Relations profession. One of these criteria is the ability that the Public Relations profession must-have. Several abilities must be had when someone will work as a Public Relations. This ability, first, is the ability to build a company image. As GW said,

after learning about Public Relations in college, I know that the Public Relations profession is not only related to persuasion and marketing. The Public Relations profession has an important position in a company or organisation and has a big responsibility to maintain and improve its image (GW, 26 October 2019).

Second, the ability to manage crises. According to JJ, "one of the criteria for the public relations profession is to have good crisis management skills so that it can build a harmonious relationship with the public" (JJ, 28 October 2019). RT has a similar view, "a person who works as a Public Relations must master CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities. The ability of CSR activities is needed when dealing with crises within the company" (RT, 24 October 2019). Third, the ability to use Information Technology. According to Retno, "the meaning of the Public Relations profession is closely related to Information Technology. Therefore, someone who works as a Public Relations must master design applications. The ability to design applications is needed to make the program follow the needs of the community."

Fourth, the Public Relations profession requires intelligence, creativity, and the ability to work together. This was conveyed by two informants in this study, namely JJ and FM. In the in-depth interview, JJ said, "a person who is a public relations professional must be smart, creative and can work well together" (JJ, 28 October 2019). According to JJ, smart and creative actions are needed when a public relations department has to make programs for Public Relations activities and educate the public. Meanwhile, teamwork skills are needed because many fields of work in Public Relations require teamwork. The ability to work together is an absolute requirement when Public Relations works in an organisation. JJ's opinion was also strengthened by FM's idea, which said, "Public relations must be smart and insightful" (FM, 26 October 2019).

Fifth, the meaning of the Public Relations profession is closely related to appearance. Some informants believe that the Public Relations profession is closely related to the presentation. According to them, the Public Relations profession is synonymous with a neat, fragrant, and pleasant appearance. As stated by EL, "public Relations profession is a 'clean' profession because it is required to dress neatly, formally and neatly" (EL, 23 October 2019). The opinion of EL was also strengthened by FM, "a public relations officer must look attractive to the public" (FM, 26 October 2019).

### **The meaning of the Public Relations Profession based on references from practitioners.**

Some opinions of Public Relations students regarding the Public Relations profession are also influenced by the opinions of Public Relations practitioners, both from universities and outside the university. Based on the sharing session with Public Relations practitioners, the definition of the Public Relations profession is grouped as follows. First, the Public Relations profession is closely related to the media. EL revealed that

the meaning of the Public Relations profession is closely related to the media because it needs mass media for publication. Therefore, someone who works as a Public Relations must know and master good and correct journalism. Regarding the media,

the Public Relations profession must equip knowledge and skills to build relationships with the media and with other institutions (EL, 23 October 2019).

Second, the meaning of the Public Relations profession is seen from its duties and responsibilities. Based on the sharing of knowledge from Public Relations practitioners, the objectives of the Public Relations profession are related to the responsibilities and capabilities of Public Relations. Regarding his duties, Public Relations must have a sense of belonging that makes Public Relations work well in the company. Regarding ability, Public Relations must be creative in creating bright ideas in making company programs. According to AL,

based on the practitioner's sharing session, I came to understand the responsibility of Public Relations. Public relations has a big responsibility in maintaining the company's image, one of which is by establishing and maintaining good relations with the media. This step was taken to help shape the company's image (AL, 30 October 2019 ).

Third, the meaning of the Public Relations profession is closely related to ability. In an in-depth interview, GW said,

I learned a lot from practitioners who came to campus and shared experiences. From the practitioners' sharing, I saw that the meaning of the Public Relations profession could not be separated from the duties and capabilities of Public Relations. Regarding his duties, Public Relations must have a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging makes Public Relations work well in the company. Regarding ability, Public Relations must be creative in creating bright ideas in building programs for the company (GW, 26 October 2019).

Fourth, the Public Relations profession is closely related to job opportunities. Based on the input from several practitioners, RT interpreted the Public Relations profession as a profession with vast job opportunities, "a person who works as a Public Relations does not always have to work in a company but can work alone with his / her abilities" (RT, 24 October 2019). FM said the same thing, "based on sharing input from practitioners on campus, and I came to understand that the scope of work of a Public Relations practitioner is vast and plays a great role in maintaining the company's image" (FM, 26 October 2019).

The opinion of RT and FM shows that their understanding of the meaning of Public Relations is closely related to the scope of work. These students do not feel that the Public Relations profession job opportunities are narrow, only related to the company. The Public Relations profession can also work independently. JJ said, "from several seminars on Public Relations that I have attended, I have come to understand that Public Relations work is extensive. Sharing from practitioners made me understand more and know what Public Relations work is all about" (JJ, 28 October 2019).

## **The definition of the Public Relations profession based on the Development of Information Technology.**

From the results of in-depth interviews and observations with several sources, some definitions of the Public Relations profession were found from the perspective of the development of Information Technology. One of them is to support marketing and promotion activities, build and increase brand awareness, and support careers and information dissemination.

First, to support marketing and promotional activities. The development of Information Technology brings new meaning to the Public Relations profession, namely in marketing and promotion activities. EL said

the meaning of the Public Relations profession is inseparable from current technological developments. Public Relations must be able to keep up with the times such as utilising social media to support Public Relations work, namely in promotional activities, corporate marketing, and to meet needs in terms of appearance through online shopping (EL, 23 October 2019).

The opinion of EL was also emphasised by GM, which interpreted the Public Relations profession as inseparable from the development of Information technology. In GM's view, every person who works as a Public Relations is required to master the use of technology and always be up to date with trends. According to GM, "the Public Relations profession requires the ability and skills of Information Technology in promotional and marketing activities. Therefore, a Public Relations practitioner must be creative in utilising social media in corporation activities such as promotion and marketing activities" (GM, 26 October 2019).

GM's statement shows that there are two things a person who is a Public Relations profession must have in relation to information technology, namely abilities and skills. According to GM, Information Technology plays a role in helping the development of Public Relations tasks in building and increasing brand awareness in company activities. RT's statement also confirmed GM's statement, "a Public Relations practitioner must follow the development of information technology. In the future, a Public Relations practitioner must be able to use and make good use of social media in supporting his career as a Public Relations, both in promotional activities and in corporate marketing activities" (RT, 24 October 2019). The opinion of GM and RT is in line with (Valentini, 2015). Public Relations professionals who use social media as an additional channel for disseminating company information, rather than a collaborative platform to encourage dialogue and collaboration and contribute to relationship building.

Second, build and increase brand awareness. The second meaning of the Public Relations profession, when viewed from the development of technology, is to build and increase brand awareness of the organisation or company. In this digital era, information technology has a huge role. By using information technology, Public Relations can build and increase

brand awareness of an organisation or company. As GM said, "the Public Relations profession also requires information technology to build and increase brand awareness" (GM, 26 October 2019).

Third, information dissemination. The definition of the Public Relations profession, if it is related to the development of Information Technology, cannot be separated from the dissemination of information. According to FM, "public relations must master the use of technology and utilise technology to assist its work in disseminating information quickly to a wider audience. Apart from that, Public Relations must also be creative in utilising social media to support its work" (FM, 26 October 2019).

This is similar to the opinion of Paine (1995 in Watson, 2012) Paine was one of the first public relations industry commentators to focus on monitoring internet coverage. He commented on the dynamic nature of the internet as "information moves fast on the Internet. Speed makes the media very dynamic and very malleable - a discussion which is hot one day may be lost tomorrow" (Watson, 2012). Taylor & Kent (2010: 212) say,

the impression that a student might have after a year of reading the spread everywhere is very likely, 'I use social media. I can easily use social media in public relations!' Without a well-established professional preference and experience regarding what works and what doesn't, young professionals, because of a lack of knowledge, are likely to believe that the articles they read in professional publications contain facts.

Fourth, career support. According to RT, "a Public Relations in today's digital era must be able to use and utilise social media well in supporting the career as a Public Relations through online shopping activities" (RT, 24 October 2019). In RT's view, Online Shopping is a way to equip yourself with clothes, shoes and other accessories as a Public Relations. GM also conveyed the same thing, "about self-development, information technology helps Public Relations to equip itself through several applications, one of which is the online shopping application" (GM, 26 October 2019). The opinion of the two informants in interpreting the Public Relations profession from an online shopping perspective is unique. So far, the meaning of the Public Relations profession has always been associated with duties and job opportunities. On the other hand, so far, the wider community has given the purpose of the Public Relations profession, which is inseparable from the clean, fragrant, and neat appearance of Public Relations. Therefore, this paper will also look at how the meaning construction of the Public Relations profession is seen from this new online shopping trend.

### **Online Shop as supporting the identity of the Public Relations profession**

Online shopping is one of the changes offered by the internet in terms of shopping innovation. Currently, sellers and buyers do not need to meet face to face because all shopping activities can be done online. In

online shopping, consumers can view items, such as pictures or photos or even videos. Online shopping outlets that are increasingly prevalent among students are making online transactions easier through Instagram. Through online shopping behaviour, students want to show the public that they can exist between groups with the same style or appearance. Online shopping is a trend for students to fulfil their needs. The development of students' habits in buying products through online stores is influenced by technological developments and is controlled by the latest fashion trends.

Kompas.com's research results show that in September 2018, the number of online shopping consumers in Indonesia is estimated to reach 11.9% of the total population in Indonesia. Olivia Putri, as the Public Relations and Communications Manager of CupoNation, explained that from her internal study, it was found that the massive growth of online shoppers in Indonesia occurred in the last three years. In 2016 it reached 9.6% and increased to 10.7% in 2017 (Putera, 2018). In general, students do online shopping activities not only for daily needs but also for fun and lifestyle. For students, looking attractive is one way to communicate their identity and also show that they deserve to be in a certain group. Social media, which has been used by Public Relations students as a means of online shopping, can be an ideal space to display self-image freely. Through Instagram, they show their appearance, namely the quality of fashion from the colour of the clothes, the clothes, and the accessories.

Quoted from Kompas on Youth Behaviour on social media, Professor Dongwoon Lee as a researcher from Pennsylvania State University, USA, said that teenagers pay attention to their self-image on social media and their environment. In his study, Lee researched Instagram to analyse people's behaviour based on age. According to Lee, this behaviour on Instagram was triggered by the desire to get attention from netizens. Self-actualisation behaviour and the creation of personal branding can be categorised as an effort to introduce one's identity to others (Fatimah Kartini, 2016). Self-actualisation and personal branding are ways of building self-identity, both as individuals and as part of certain groups.

Referring to Lee's research results (in Fatimah Kartini, 2016), the behaviour of self-actualisation and personal branding carried out by students of the Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations study program is a way to construct their identity, which can be seen from their status on social media. Besides, self-actualisation and personal branding can also be seen from the way they use Instagram, including online shopping behaviour. According to Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students, online shopping provides many benefits and advantages to strengthen their identity as Public Relations candidates, as well as in building the Public Relations profession identity.

First, in addition to the guaranteed quality of goods in online shopping, it is practical and efficient. Referring to Pratiwi (2013), the phenomenon of online stores among students affects student consumption patterns because online shopping is considered practical and efficient. EL

said, "the advantages of online shopping are lower prices, guaranteed and good quality goods. There are also reviews from previous buyers, so you can tell whether the item is of good quality or not" (EL, 23 October 2019).

So, it can be concluded that the informants assess the lower price of goods and guaranteed product quality are reasons for shopping online, rather than offline. FM, as the third informant also conveyed the same thing, "I choose online shopping instead of offline shopping because it is more practical, safe, and efficient" (FM, 26 October 2019).

The phenomenon of the emergence of online shopping outlets has led to changes in shopping behaviour among students. Online shops increase students' interest in choosing online shopping that is profitable for them. Timesaving, good and guaranteed quality of goods, more varied models, updated types of goods, and lower prices are some of the advantages of online shopping. The two informants also conveyed ways to avoid being deceived by the seller, namely consumers must be observant and look for information related to the product.

Second, transactions are more straightforward in online shopping. In their activities, online stores have different transaction methods. Even though online shopping may seem very complicated to new users, it is very easy to do online shopping for old users. Trust is one of the conditions that is always used in online shopping.

The ease of shopping transactions also affects how often students shop online. EL and GW very often do online shopping activities. They make online shopping transactions up to five times a month to buy collectables or daily necessities. In the interview, EL stated that "online shopping has become my hobby, and I can shop up to five times a month. However, that does not mean I am wasteful of money" (EL, 23 October 2019). On the other hand, RT and FM do not shop online very often. RT said, "there is no standard shopping frequency in a month because I shop online only for the things I need" (RT, 24 October 2019).

Based on interviews with several informants, online shopping has become a habit in student life. FM and RT shop for goods online because they need it, but EL and GW make online shopping a hobby and fulfil the needs of prospective Public Relations officers who are required to look attractive. This need encourages them to make efforts to obtain items that are considered to support their activities as Public Relations practitioners and one way that is considered practical is online shopping transactions. Online shopping transactions show that students have a high buying interest in items sold online. Ease of transaction can be in the form of an informative and fun purchasing process, as well as fast and precise product delivery.

The third is the satisfaction of the shopping results. The high student interest in buying online goods is evidence of high satisfaction with the products purchased. Ultimately, the experience prompted them to buy back the product. This is also confirmed by Oliver (in Rodhy & Hakim, 2016), who says that consumer purchases will lead to consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The notion of satisfaction, according to

marketing experts Kotler and Keller (in Rodhy & Hakim, 2016), is a feeling of pleasure or disappointment that arises from comparing a product (or result) with their expectations.

In line with the statements of Kotler and Keller (Rodhy & Hakim, 2016), the satisfaction felt by Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students in shopping online was reiterated by several informants. GW said, "through online shopping, we can get unique items that are not sold in offline stores and many goods at low prices with good quality. Apart from that, there are lots of discounts and promos" (GW, 26 October 2019).

In contrast to the opinion of GW. In an in-depth interview, RT expressed another satisfaction from online shopping, "online shopping is more practical, easy, and efficient. From online shopping, we can find out about fashion developments, and it can also be used for promotion" (RT, 24 October 2019).

In addition, FM replied that the things people buy from online shopping could make them more confident and support a more attractive appearance. FM's response is in line with Rachmat's statement in his book, "*Psychology of Communication*" (Rachmat, 1999), which states that several factors influence self-concept, one of which is society. Society has certain expectations for all individuals, where all individuals will try to carry out these expectations. Therefore, Public Relations students are always taught about how other people think of them and how they judge their appearance.

Based on the results of interviews with several informants, online shop activities can be used by students to support their appearance, both when they are not in the public area or when they are in the public area. In addition, through online shopping, Public Relations students can get information about the latest fashion trends to find out how to dress attractively while carrying out assignments. An online shop is basically an electronic supermarket where all kinds of products can be easily found and obtained by Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students. This makes online shops a place in the hearts of some students and makes students feel satisfied because almost anything can be obtained through online shopping.

### **The construction of the identity of the Public Relations profession through online shopping activities**

According to Blumer, in the process of self-identification, there are three acting units, namely 'the self,' 'the acting self' that acts internally and about a situation and 'act' that is formed or constructed by interpreting the situation (Blumer 1969: 83 in West-Turner, 2012). In building this concept, Blumer explained that interpretation consists of three steps: first, 'the acting self' must identify the things that will be handled by the action, such as tasks, opportunities, obstacles, distractions, and resources. Second, 'the acting self' must also value



things in a certain way. Third, 'the self-acting' must make decisions based on that assessment ( Blumer 1969: 85; West-Turner, 2012).

These three things occurred when students from the Public Relations study program constructed the identity of the Public Relations profession. Construction of the identity of the Public Relations profession was built through 3 stages. In the first stage, they constructed the identity of Public Relations based on identification related to matters that must be addressed. For example, the tasks that ought to be handled in the Public Relations profession. Based on this understanding, they constructed the identity of the Public Relations profession about the ability to communicate, the ability to build relationships with the surrounding communities, and the ability to be creative. The second stage is 'the acting self' that must judge things in a certain way. In this second stage, the construction of the Public Relations profession was inseparable from factors outside of students, including the values held by people around them and from values held by institutions that are strongly influenced by the culture of those institutions. Littlejohn & Foss (2012) stated that in Asia, identity is often obtained not through individual efforts, but collective efforts of groups and joint efforts among humans. At this stage, communication has a vital role. Michael Hecht and his colleagues said that identity is the primary link between individuals and societies, and communication is the link that allows the relationship to occur (Littlejohn & Foss, 2012, p. 131).

In the third stage, the construction of the identity of the Public Relations Professional is carried out based on the understanding that the acting person must make decisions based on that assessment. According to Hecht (in Littlejohn & Foss, 2012, p.131), the identity of an individual is code that defines the membership of that individual in a diverse community. In this context, the intended code consists of symbols such as the form of clothing and ownership; and words such as self-description or objects that one usually said, and the meaning that one and others relate to things (Littlejohn & Foss, 2012, p.131). At this level, the symbols that are used are strongly influenced by the dominant institution that builds the identity (Castells, 2004, p.7), or very much determined by the surrounding communities. In other words, the process of self-identification that occurs is strongly influenced by the dominant institution and society, which then determines symbols that will be used by an individual.

For students of the Public Relations study program of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, the symbols that are used, such as clothing, are strongly influenced by dominant institutions and the public who view that a person in Public Relations will highly value good appearance and fashion. In the public's view, appearance, or style will affect the personality of a person who works in Public Relations. Thus, the Public Relations profession is identical with a neat and attractive appearance and frequently perceived as a glamorous profession. This view arises because the Public Relations profession is a profession that has scopes of work related to clients, the media, or the public in general.

This view influenced students of Public Relations study program of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana when they constructed the identity of the Public Relations profession, through the symbols of clothing that they wore. Referring to the opinion of Charles Horton Cooley through the looking-self glass theory, the students of the Public Relations study program of Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana understood symbols of the identity of the Public Relations profession when they stood before a mirror. This concept is based on the view that a person imagines his self-image obtained from others, especially from the significant others (Umiarso, 2014). The clothes that someone wears show how he sees himself, how he values himself, and how others see him.

In the current globalisation era, the use of symbols (in this context is clothing) is also greatly influenced by technological developments. Information about trending clothes, updated shoe models and perfumes that are used by famous people delivered via the Internet or social media. One of the social media outlets used by students is Instagram. Instagram is a new social media app that takes advantage of the internet. Instagram is a technology-based online media that has characters of flexibility, it is used interactively, and it can be used privately or publicly (Putri, 2018). As one of the services on Instagram, which is proliferating, is the facility to do online shopping. This is often referred to as Online Shop (Sari, 2015). Online shopping (Pratiwi, 2013) is an online buying and selling service without having to face to face with the seller or the buyer directly. Instagram is equipped with a photo-sharing facility, and Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms in the world, including Indonesia. According to the WeAreSocial.net and Hootsuite survey results, Instagram places the seventh rank of most used social media platforms in the world. Also, to be a platform for sharing photos, Instagram is used to market business products. There are more than 50 million people as Instagram users in Indonesia (Riyanto, 2016).

The construction of a Public Relations profession's identity cannot be separated from the development of existing technology. The presence of new media has become one of the new factors in shaping identity. One of the studies conducted by Pasaribu in 2014 in Medan entitled Construction of Self Identity Youth Instagram Media Users in Medan City (Pasaribu, 2008) explained that young people use Instagram to follow trends and to enhance existence among friends and society. The results of this study explain that Instagram can meet the needs of young people (early, middle, and late), thus encouraging them always to be updated. Instagram becomes a new medium that they use to build self-concepts and seek recognition from friends and the environment. Instagram becomes the media to develop self-identity. In addition to this research, there are still many other studies that seek to express and explain the role of the media, both mainstream media and new media, in building individual identity and constructing individual and group identities.

Mainstream media and new media have tremendous power in influencing society and shaping the community's identity itself. New media

becomes an open, flexible, and dynamic information environment that allows humans to develop their knowledge orientation, even as a means of sharing knowledge. This is, as said by Levy, who views the World Wide Web as an open, flexible and dynamic information environment that allows humans to develop new knowledge orientations and also engage in a democratic world of more interactive and community-based sharing and empowerment (Littlejohn & Foss, 2012). The virtual world provides a virtual meeting place that expands the social world, creates new knowledge opportunities, and provides a place to share views widely (Littlejohn & Foss, 2012).

This logic is what builds the understanding that currently, new media (including social media and Instagram) have a significant role in building everyone's identity. In other words, the social environment plays a role in building a person's personality, not only the real situation but the environment built in cyberspace. The interactions carried out are not only direct interactions, but also interactions using new media, both social media and Instagram. Stella Ting-Toomey (in Littlejohn & Foss, 2012) says that a person's identity is always the result of social interaction. The image of identity, or self-reflection, is formed through negotiation when we state, modify, and challenge our identification with others.

As a future for Public Relations practitioners, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students construct the identity of the Public Relations profession through the social interactions they carry out, both direct communication and interaction using new media. Negotiations that occur in interactions then form self-identity, or even strengthen one's identity.

Currently, one of the media that is involved in the negotiation process is social media, especially Instagram. Instagram is a medium that brings together one individual with another in one social interaction. Through this application, Instagram is here as a medium for each individual to state their identity, even the way they modify their identity to others. One of the Instagram applications that play a role in forming individual identities is online shopping. During its development, online shopping activities began to experience a shift. Online shopping is not just buying to make ends meet, but is more widely used to fulfil the fun and lifestyle of everyone who does this activity, including Public Relations students. For students of the Public Relations study program who have an understanding that the identity of the Public Relations profession is greatly influenced by appearance, online shopping is an urgency. This understanding is based on the opinion of Kriyantono, who views the Public Relations profession from an interpretive approach.

This interpretive approach views public relations and organisational activities as a result of the meanings created and interacted by the public, internally, and externally. Public relations is a symbolic activity that is subjective and assumes that the organisation and its public use symbols to create and interpret meaning in interaction activities (Rachmat, 2012:42). In this sense, symbols become very important in Public

Relations activities. Therefore, symbols are also crucial in building a Public Relations profession identity. In understanding the Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana student Public Relations program, one way that can be done to bring out this symbol is through online shopping via Instagram. This, as stated by several sources in this study, is how they construct the identity of the Public Relations profession through online shopping using Instagram media.

The first is to enhance appearance and self-image. Regarding the relationship between online shopping activities and the Public Relations profession, students assess that everything obtained from online shopping can be used to improve the quality and self-image of Public Relations and can be a strategy for preparing fashion and appearance of Public Relations professionals. EL stated that online shopping activities could be a strategy for everyone who works in Public Relations because items purchased from online shopping such as bags, clothes, or shoes are considered to support the self-image and appearance of Public Relations, "the results of online shopping (clothes, bags, shoes, and gadgets) can support the appearance of Public Relations students both in the university environment and at work" (EL, 23 October 2019).

Referring to Adnanputra's opinion in a workshop entitled "*Public Relations Strategy*" (in (Ambarwati, 2009), GW also expressed a similar opinion, "items such as makeup, skincare, and fashion can be used to enhance a good Public Relations appearance" (GW, 26 October 2019). GW claims that online shopping is a form of self-care. He said that items purchased from online shopping could be used to improve the appearance and self-image of Public Relations in front of the public. EL also assessed that items obtained from online shopping help Public Relations to appear more attractive.

Based on the results of the interview, students considered that a pleasing appearance could also be an essential asset to prepare everyone who likes to be a Public Relations professional for a better appearance and a better self-image in front of the community. A Public Relations expert must know very well how to behave and dress appropriately, how to be graceful and polite, and how to have other supporting factors. Here, students assess that items purchased from online shopping can be a supporting factor for a good self-image of a Public Relations professional because goods from online shopping are considered to have the ability to foster students' confidence in public and capabilities to prepare students to become much better professionals in Public Relations.

Second, get information about fashion developments. Apart from the topic of appearance, other things can be obtained from shopping activities. This information helps consumers to choose, make decisions, and compare items received from online shopping. Romney and Steinbart (Rompas et al., 2018) state that information is data that has been processed to provide meaning and can improve the decision-making process. Referring to the above statement, the information and information are deemed necessary by students because they can get other

benefits in preparing themselves as Public Relations professionals. From the interview, GW said, "from online shopping, you can get information about fashion. In the online shopping application, there are also best seller items or top items this week (items with high sales and lots of enthusiasts) that I can use as a reference" (GW, 26 October 2019).

In the interview, RT also said that "from online shopping, there are trendy items that are used as references, and from online shopping, I can get information about the development of models and current fashion" (RT, 24 October 2019). GW and RT consider that online shopping activities will be useful for them to get information about fashion. The week's best-selling items and top items can be a reference for a better appearance. Meanwhile, FM said, "there are many things that can be used as references to look stylish. Now I know about the current fashion developments" (FM, 26 October 2019). Online shopping outlets are beneficial for students. For example, FM admits that online shopping activities can get references on how to look stylish as a Public Relations professional. With this mindset, students assess that online activities not only satisfy the enjoyment of shopping, but also online shopping can affect their work as a Public Relations professional.

Third, Public Relations professionals need to be more selective in shopping online. Public relations professionals must be able to observe online shopping activities from another positive side. In online shopping activities, everyone needs to be careful, selective, and critical in choosing what to buy, likewise with Public Relations students who are already very addicted to online shopping activities. EL said, "Public Relations professionals must be smarter and more selective in choosing online stores, so they are not deceived by sellers who sell goods that are not standardised" (EL, 23 October 2019). FM also said, "Public Relations professionals should use their intelligence to be more careful in choosing goods so they can choose sellers who sell quality products" (FM, 26 October 2019).

The existence of many online stores is a good alternative for students to shop. In the interview, students felt that their knowledge of Public Relations could be a provision for online shopping activities. Students consider that Public Relations professionals must be more selective, thorough, and critical when they shop online because their knowledge of Public Relations professionals must be used anytime and anywhere. Public relations must be able to apply their knowledge, starting from critical thinking, being selective in choosing, and being careful in making decisions when buying products online because it can benefit them.

## **CONCLUSION**

The identity of the Public Relations profession is constructed based on a body of knowledge, as a profession that can communicate, build relationships with the surrounding community, and be creative and interesting.

First, the Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations Study Program students interpret the Public Relations profession based on references. There are four references used, first, based on references from the mass media and from the surrounding community (the definition of the Public Relations profession before studying in the Public Relations study program). Based on these references, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana Public Relations students interpret the Public Relations profession as a profession that is closely related to communication, identical to Marketing and identical to office workers (working indoors). Second, based on references from universities. Based on these references, the meaning of the Public Relations profession is closely related to a) communication in the context of knowledge and skills for direct communication and communication using the media; b) Public Relations is synonymous with a profession that can build a corporate image, overcome crises, use Information Technology, be smart, creative, and work together; c) The meaning of the Public Relations profession is closely related to appearance. Third, based on references from practitioners. Based on references from practitioners, the purpose of the Public Relations profession must be seen from the duties and responsibilities and is closely related to the media. This cannot be separated from creativity and immense job opportunities for the public relations profession. Fourth, based on the development of information technology. The definition of the Public Relations profession is closely related to marketing and promotional activities, building and increasing brand awareness, supporting careers, and disseminating information.

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