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Guanxi, Astrology and Symmetry: 
Asian business and its impact on public relations practice

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Abstract

With the dominance of Western-based public relations models and theories, non-Western practitioners across the globe instinctively attempt to implement them, often unsuccessfully, regardless of their surrounding environment. This study compares and analyses differences between Asian and Western approaches to business and therefore public relations. While the Western practitioners predominantly practiced symmetrical communication models, the Asian practitioners only idealised these models but depended upon press-agentry/publicity and the public information model. Other models such as the personal influence and cultural interpreter models were heavily used in Asia. A review of business practices revealed that in Asia, the line between business and personal relationships is extremely blurred. Further analysis revealed that cultural dimensions and topoi were even more varied between the two regions. While the Western region adulates individualism, the Asian region sees it as an act of selfishness and prefers collectivism and hierarchy to maintain harmony within the community. A strong connection exists between culture and business practices, which in turn directly affect public relations practice, making the use of generic Western-based public relations models complex and unsuitable for the non-Western society. This paper highlights a research opportunity to empirically analyse and understand the Asian business and the implications for models of public relations.

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Introduction
The public relations profession is seen as a management function in the business framework, contributing to strategic decision-making and organisational effectiveness. With the rise of globalisation and many organisations expanding their business internationally, being fluent in diverse business practices, understanding global economic conditions and engaging an array of cultural norms of an international society are high priorities for today’s organisations. Understanding the practice of public relations globally goes beyond acknowledging the theories developed in this field (White & Dozier, 1992). The public relations profession as practiced today is based on the theoretical foundation built by academics in the Western society, yet practitioners from around the world struggle to often put into practice the theories that their Western counterparts seem to implement so effortlessly (Verčič, van Ruler, Bütschi & Flodin, 2001, p. 374).

A dominant theory is the four models of public relations developed by Grunig (1984) in which he suggests that the two-way symmetrical communication model is by far the best model to practice for any public relations practitioner. This thinking has certainly made its mark globally as regardless of culture of region, practitioners around the globe are not only aware of the four models of public relations but also believe that the two-way symmetrical model is the best approach (Park, 2003 and Lim, Goh & Sriramesh, 2005). However, scholars such as Holtzhausen, Peterson and Tindall (2003) and Bardhan (1996) believe that the diversity in culture itself challenges the practicality of two-way symmetrical communication. This requires the applicability of public relations models to be examined in terms of region, its business practices and culture to understand why the dominant models from the Western region become impractical for non-Western practitioners.

One such set of non-Western practitioners are Asian public relations professionals. Asia brings an array of unique cultural, business and social aspects to influence the practice of public relations within its society. The need to understand the public relations profession within this region goes beyond merely appreciating the diversity. Firstly, international public relations literature is relatively scarce, and many of the studies have been conducted purely by Western scholars (van Ruler, Verčič, Bütschi & Flodin, 2004). Secondly, the current public relations literature either broadly discusses cultural differences as the major factors for differing public relations practice or simply illustrates the current practices of specific Asian countries. However, the relationship between broad cultural issues and the differing states of public relations practice may be too distant. There is a need to focus on a more direct influence into the global public relations profession. By dwelling deeper and understanding the rich surroundings of the region, the culture that influences people’s behaviour, corporate governance and business practices could help identify the reasons behind the unique public relations practice within each particular region.

Public relations is recognised as a business function, and thus analysing the business practices of the three regions will provide further insights into this perspective. This research paper will use existing literature to identify business practices as the more direct influence to the differing practice of public relations within Asia. The paper will proceed as follows. Firstly, public relations practice in Asia will be identified in terms of one or more of the four models of public relations. Secondly, the paper will discuss region-specific public relations practice, highlighting the uniqueness of the
profession. Thirdly, it will discuss an array of unique business practices within Asia and align this knowledge with the unique public relations practice. Finally, Asian culture will be examined and then linked to the region’s current business practices. The aim of this is to highlight that the public relations profession is globally diverse and bring to light the various influences in Asian culture, from its business practices to its people that play a key role in shaping the profession, making it virtually impossible to impose a ‘one size fits all approach’.

Four Models of Public Relations
Grunig (1984) developed the four models of public relations (press agentry/publicity, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical). Public relations scholars in the Western regions often prescribe the two-way symmetrical model as the ideal communication model that should be implemented by all public relations practitioners. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2000) suggest that public relations can have an impact in shaping mutually beneficial relationships necessary for organisational survival and success, and two-way symmetrical communication is a key foundation in achieving this. These statements exemplify public relations as a dominant and powerful industry, having the influence to shape business practices and the societies surrounding it.

Although most Western practitioners and scholars revere the two-way symmetrical model, once examined in Asia, the conclusions are not so positive. Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang and Lyra (1995) showed that in India, although two-way symmetrical communication was idealised, there was little evidence of its practice. Bardhan (1996) concurs when discussing public relations in India and stated that during interviews with Indian public relations practitioners, any practical discussion on two-way symmetrical communication caused, “…distinct rupture in the flow of conversation” (p. 245). Park (2003) claims that Korean practitioners understand the four models but implementing two-way symmetrical model in the country is no more than wishful thinking. There is distinct division on the practicality of the two-way symmetrical model between Western and Asian regions.

Verčič, Grunig and Grunig (1996) state that the four models of public relations exist in every culture but are only applied differently; thus suggesting that the models are applicable and practical, even in the Asian region. Given the literature on the four models and the regions, and the link between models and culture in the public relations literature, below is a comparative analysis of public relations practice between Asia and the West.

Asian region
Within Asia, press-agentry/publicity and public information are by far the most popular models. Yungwook and Childers (1998) suggest that although Koreans aspire to two-way communication, press-agentry is by far the model most rigorously used. Lim et. al (2005, p. 329) studied Singapore’s practitioners and found that 82% of respondents believed that publicity was the main purpose of public relations. In India, Bardhan (1996) found that positive press coverage is defined as good public relations, hence capturing the essence of the press-agentry/publicity model. Public information model is also highly practiced in India, especially among public sector practitioners. China is similar to India, where both press-agentry/publicity and public information
are equally practiced (Strenski & Yue, 1998). Taiwan; however, like many other East Asian countries, is attuned to practicing mainly the press-agentry/publicity model (Grunig et. al., 1995). Overall in this region, there is clear usage of the one-way communication models.

**Western region**

It is in the Western society that two-way symmetrical communication model is somewhat prominent. However, Yungwook and Childers (1998) found that although two-way symmetric is hailed as being the most effective, US corporations mainly practice the two-way asymmetric model. Thus, even in Western regions, two-way symmetrical communication is a normative model and is rarely practiced.

Figure 1 below illustrates the dominant models within each region. As the figure shows, there is a distinct difference between the dominant/preferred models in each of the regions. By purely examining the regions through the lens of the four models of public relations, an array of differences have already emerged. While Asia predominantly practices publicity/press agentry, the Western region works at the other end of the spectrum with the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical model. It is important now to unravel the differences even further. Given that a number of differences can be identified with both regions having a preference to particular models, the practice of public relations within each of these regions needs to be considered more carefully.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publicity/ press agentry</th>
<th>Public information</th>
<th>Two-way asymmetrical</th>
<th>Two-way symmetrical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Pictorial view of the four models and their fit within the two regions

**Global Practice of PR**

There are two models that seem to dominate the practice of public relations in Asia – personal influence and cultural interpreter model. The personal influence model involves the development of key and meaningful contacts and the cultural interpreter model plays a vital role in multi-national corporations, where public relations practitioners are hired to interpret cultural norms to these foreign companies (Grunig et. al., 1995). The personal influence model is especially interesting as it focuses on the relationships a public relations practitioner as an individual, rather than as a representative of an organisation. It is not asymmetrical communication, as it does not control the environment and nor is it symmetrical as it does not focus on mutual understanding (Toth, 2000).

In Asia, Sriramesh, Kim & Takasaki (1999, p. 272) suggest a quid pro quo relationship between public relations practitioners and key personnel from government regulators to media persons. In China, *Guanxi* – a method of building and sustaining strategic personal relationships (Buckley, Clegg & Tan, 2006), which will be discussed later in the paper, is used similarly to maintain key relationships.
with strategic influences within the practitioner’s line of work (Hung & Chen, 2004). Guest relations/hospitality relations is often a key role for a public relations practitioner in Asia. Sriramesh (as cited in Grunig et al., 1995) discovered that practitioners in India were mostly occupied in carrying out the following roles:

- Organisation of gifts for VIPs.
- Arrangement of VIP luncheons and dinners.
- Entertainment of VIP’s family members.

In Singapore, the situation is similar as Lim et al. (2005) established that 70% of practitioners developed and maintained key relationships with media, economists, analysts, government officials and industry experts. Grunig et al. (1995) found similar practices in India. Toth (2000) identified that practitioners using the personal influence model are doing so with those individuals/stakeholders that are linked with the organisation and to some extent are an active public. Hence building a relationship with these publics, whether it is by requesting favours or by providing them, they are notionally engaging and working with the public in relation to organisational issues. So, while the Western practitioners are building mutually beneficial relationships with their publics through two-way asymmetrical communication or two-way symmetrical communication, Asian practitioners are instead building these same mutually beneficial relationships with targeted, key, strategic and influential individuals within their community.

The four models have been examined for both regions by considering an array of region-specific public relation practices in Asia and the West. In order to understand the differing practices, there is a need to examine an element such as business practices, which is more closely linked to public relations practice, as mentioned earlier in this paper.

**Business Practices within Asia**

As shown earlier, public relations practice differs significantly in Asia. This section will highlight the link between business practices and the practice of public relations. Coombs, Holladay, Hasenauer and Signitzer (1994) indicated that public relations being an organisational function is impacted by the way the business operates. This substantiates the view that public relations cannot be practiced in isolation or deviate from current corporate structures and cultures. To understand the relationship between business practices and public relations, it has been necessary to examine the literature outside the public relations field. Organisational structures and priorities are mapped differently within each of the regions. The Asian region brings its own unique practices to the corporate environment, having an effect on other domains within the business. Below is a comparative analysis of business practices between the Asian and Western regions:

**Shareholder Influence**

In a Western region such as Australia, dominant stakeholders are often external shareholders. However, in India and China, community and family networks influence business structure. Board of management is forever mindful of the family and government network, usually at the expense of minor investors (Kimber & Lipton, 2005). This identifies the clear disparity of power and presence of inequality in the Asian region, in comparison to the West.
**Workplace Environment**
Independent trade unions and associations often represent employees in Western regions. However, in many Asian countries, employees are closely aligned to a caste community or to business owners. Trade unions exist but are easily influenced via loyalty to the company (Kimber & Lipton, 2005). For example, in Japan employees are not encouraged to voice their rights. Their success is underpinned purely on their ability to work hard and sacrifice all else for the company good. Demise (2005) believes that this has led to Karoshi – death by overwork; thus companies are constantly in scandals, yet manage to persevere. Demise (2005) did however mention that new corporate governance was introduced in 2003, but resistance to the new regulations is still relatively high across the sector.

**Personal Influence in Business**
Personal influence model plays a key role in the Asian region. In the Western regions, there is a clear distinction between personal and business relationships, but in most Asian countries, the relationships are often blurred (So & Walker, 2005). While in Western regions, family relations are often hidden during business negotiations to avoid conflict of interest, in Asian regions, any perceivable relationship with the other party is identified and emphasised (Reynolds & Valentine, 2004). Sriramesh (as cited in Grunig et. al., 1995) states that it is not uncommon to, “...invite key individuals to family celebrations such as marriages” (p. 180). This shapes the basis for practitioners to implement the personal influence model for public relations based activities, as only then the public relations strategies will work well in such a society.

In China, the personal influence model operates at a different level. The terms guanxi and mianzi illustrate a strategic and deliberate technique of personal influence. Guanxi translated purely means personal ties but as So and Walker (2005) highlight, it is more than just building a network. So and Walker (2005) define Guanxi as the, “...method of economic organisation without resorting to law or other formal rules” (p. 2). They suggest that maintaining contacts is only a matter of general interest in the West, but in China it is a deliberate and formalised ritual:

“Maintaining guanxi requires the expenditure of time and money at an intensity which Westerners can have difficulty accepting and, if accepted, have great difficulty sustaining. The orchestration and elaboration of guanxi-moves can irritate Westerners and highlights the clash of cultures” (p. 12).

Another factor to the guanxi strategy is mianzi, which Buckley et. al. (2006) define as the “...recognition by others of an individual’s social standing and position” (p. 276). Relationships are managed by establishing guanxi and giving mianzi reciprocally. For example, businessmen in China will often talk loudly on the phone in public to highlight their importance - their mianzi (Ebenkamp, 2006). Trust is the foundation of this practice and is often established through determining commonalities between the parties and giving mutual respect to one another (Buckley et. al., 2006). Although Guanxi is an ancient practice, it is by no means a dying one. In fact, Guanxi has expanded with the introduction of new technology. Chinese, especially youth, are building social networks through internet sites such as QQ, which are far more advanced and sophisticated than popular American networking
services (Ebenkamp, 2006). These deep, ritualised business activities cannot be ignored when developing public relations strategies.

**Spiritual Influence in Business**
Apart from personal influences, there are other factors in the Asian region that are extremely foreign to the West. In the West, the protestant work ethic has dominated the practice of business activities since the 1970s. It is more apparent in cultures where people have a high need for achievement, individuality and in some cases high power distance as well (Furnham et. al., 1993). However, in Asian countries such as India, astrology plays a key role within the community, including business (Tsuruoka, 1993).

With more than 80% of the Indian population being Hindu, astrological sciences such as Vedic are not only consulted for issues such as marriage and personal fulfilment but also in the frame of corporate culture. It has been taken so seriously that in 2002, University Grants Commission of India recommended astrology teaching to be incorporated in University teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Maiti, 2002). Tsuruoka (1993) determined that many Asian stockbrokers resort to palmistry and personal astrology for advice on purchasing or selling of particular shares. It’s in situations such as these where a local public relations strategy would work best rather than implementing foreign ideals, which have been created by a region so unlike the local region.

**Table 1: Summary of regional business practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Stakeholder influence</th>
<th>Workplace environment</th>
<th>Personal influence</th>
<th>Spiritual influences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Company’s family members – top priority</td>
<td>Little power to trade unions</td>
<td>Use of Guanxi and Mianzi in China</td>
<td>Corporate relationship between individual and astrologer – India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tall pyramid style organisational structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Close relationships between employer and employee</td>
<td>Business and personal relationships blurred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Karoshi (death by overwork) - Japan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Equal opportunity to all stakeholders</td>
<td>Trade unions have power and influence</td>
<td>Distinct difference between personal and business relationships</td>
<td>Protestant work ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flatter organisational structures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 (above) summarises the various business practices within each region that have been discussed in this section. It has been shown in this section that business practices have a very close relationship with the practice of public relations – it is
very much a direct influence. However, these business practices would have had to emerge from other influences such as culture. Thus, it is only relevant to consider cultural literature to appreciate the relationship between business practices and culture to complete the concept of culture influencing business practices, which in turn influences the practice of public relations.

**Culture and its People**

The region-specific business customs seen in the paper so far provide legitimate reasoning for the variation in the public relations practice in the three regions. However, to understand this legitimacy further, it is essential to examine the culture - the initial influence of elements such as business and society. Reynolds and Valentine (2004) suggest that culture, “...creates a worldview, a unique perspective of reality, a distinctive set of beliefs, values and attitudes” (p. 1). Schepers (2006) adds to this and proposes that culture has a strong influence on individual’s awareness and reasoning. This suggests that the influence can then transcend to the wider community and filter through each element within that culture.

Cultural dimensions and topoi are often referred to in public relations literature, where culture is discussed as a key influence on the practice. The relevant research conducted by Hofstede (2001) on cultural dimensions and Leichty and Warner (2001) on cultural topoi is used to analytically compare the culture within the three regions and identify the most dominant dimensions and topoi existing within each region.

For the purposes of this paper, the following dimensions and topoi will be discussed: collectivism vs individualism, fatalist topoi, hierarchy, power distance, and long-term vs short-term orientation. Table 2 summarises the results for each of the regions and portrays the most dominant dimensions and topoi for both regions. According to the study conducted by Hofstede (2001), the Asian region predominantly had significantly higher power distance than the Western region and dimensions such as collectivism and long-term orientation were prevalent throughout its countries. The major cultural topoi present in Asia were fatalist and hierarchical. This is the complete opposite of the results acquired by the Western region, which topped in individualism and short-term orientation and had relatively low power distance. This already begins to explain the vast difference between the Asian and Western region’s approach to business practices.

**Table 2: Most prevalent cultural topoi and dimensions for each region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Cultural topoi/s</th>
<th>Cultural dimension/s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Fatalist</td>
<td>Long-term orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Collectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Large power distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Autonomous individualist</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competitive individualist</td>
<td>Small power distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Short-term orientation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Developed by author, based on research by Hofstede (2001) and Leichty and Warner (2001)*
Collectivism vs Individualism
Collectivism is very prominent in almost all Asian countries, while individualism is the major feature of Western countries. Even in Leichty and Warner’s (2001) cultural topoi, the West predominantly showcased autonomous individualist and the competitive individualist topoi. Leichty (2003) suggests that especially the “...competitive individualist’s voice is a powerful voice in the dominant public relations coalition” (p. 296). This explains why public opinion campaigns in collaboration with two-way communication models are successful as there is a genuine lack of fear of any negative repercussions in voicing one’s own opinion. However, individualism in Asia is perceived as selfishness and denotes a lack of respect towards others in the community (Hofstede, 2001, p. 210). For example, in China, collectivism relates closely to the Confucian worldview which highlights the lack of existence outside the individual’s relationship network (So & Walker (2005, p. 93). In Korea, Choi and Cameron (2005, p. 177) discovered that there was actually an official term for collectivism – Cheong, where individual units will bond together to form a unified unit.

Harmony is another aspect of collectivism that is readily used in the Asian region. Rhee (2002) defines harmony as “...overcoming individuality to maintain harmony in the family” (p. 162). Family is often seen as the prototype of social organisations. So and Walker (2005) also suggest that often in Asia individuality is set aside to avoid disturbing family harmony and often people will place family’s priorities above their own. These features of the Asian region provide the rationale for family-oriented businesses to still be dominating the region.

Fatalist
The fatalist cultural topoi is specific to the Asian region. Leichty (2003) explains the fatalist phenomenon as such:

“Fatalist culture does not consider public relations to be a self-defining and self-regulating system. Public relations is whatever top management says it is: a marginal organizational function that is not seated at the management roundtable” (p. 283)

The fatalist culture links directly to the personal influence model. Leichty and Warner (2001) describe the culture’s decision principle as “...let fate decide” (p. 66). This echoes the observation made by Maiti (2002, p. 5) that regardless of India’s advancement in education and technology, the majority of people rely heavily upon astrology for guidance in business and personal endeavours. This is certainly not the viewpoint taken on by the West, yet Asian public relations practitioners are idealising communication models that clearly do not sit comfortably within the culture.

Hierarchy and Power Distance
The West scored relatively low in power distance as managers rely more on personal experience rather than authority for decision making (Hofstede, 2001, p. 87 and 107). Reynolds and Valentine (2004) discussed that hierarchical structures helped maintain harmony in Asia, hence portraying the clear link between hierarchy and collectivism. Such thinking transfers to the business world where structurally hierarchy is preferred, despite the inequality amongst managers and workers (p. 44). Holtzhausen et. al. (2003) suggest that within the Asian region, “…hierarchical and Confucianism would make two-way symmetry culturally impractical and unacceptable” (p. 310).
Long-term vs Short-term Orientation
According to Hofstede (2001, p. 351), long-term orientation prioritises relationships according to status, and values elements such as persistence and perseverance. The top five countries scoring the highest in long-term orientation were China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea (p. 356). Short-term orientation focuses on quick results and status within a relationship holds very little relevance (p. 351). With the Western and Asian regions scoring at opposite ends of the spectrum validates the still thriving age-old art of Guanxi, which most Western practitioners find arduous, irrelevant and time-consuming.

It has been identified that culture impacts on not only individuals in the society but also organisations, which in turn will affect the functions with the organisation such as finance, human resources and even public relations. Coombs et. al. (1994) suggest that organisational behaviour is directly impacted by culture and since public relations is a form of organisational behaviour, it too will be affected by culture. After the analysis conducted in this section of the paper, it can be concluded that public relations models and practice cannot be implemented or developed in isolation. Culture and the elements it impacts should be carefully considered to devise effective and practical public relations models to suit the environment.

Implications and Opportunities for Further Research
The current research claims that culture in itself is a major influence on the practice of public relations. However, this review of the public relations literature suggests that business practices has a more direct influence on public relations practices. As shown in this paper, public relations is practiced in an array of unique styles and forms to suit its society. This is reason enough for scholars and practitioners in Europe and Asia to see two-way symmetrical communication as normative model as suggested by Grunig (2001).

Symmetrical communication usually works with the understanding that the publics to be engaged are equipped with equal skills and resources to sustain effective dialogue and contribution to a public relations’ activity (Karlberg, 1996). Resources and communication skills of publics vary across the region. Varying efficiencies of communication infrastructure within a region and the array of preferred indigenous communication methods have a strategic and operational influence on the practice of public relations (Sriramesh, 2004). Furthermore, the culture itself imposes difficulties in implementing symmetrical communication models. Elements such as hierarchical structures, collectivism and uncertainty avoidance add to the complications in practicing standardised models. Bardhan (1996) suggests that, “there is a need to challenge the assumption that not all communication cultures are universally conceptualised” (p. 227). It is only when the universal concepts are challenged that new and more effective models that are region-specific can be developed and successfully implemented.

Culture is remarkably unique to each region and this review found that as public relations is a business function, overall Asian culture impacts on its business practices, which in turn influences the practice of public relations within this diverse region. Culture is so deeply rooted in every aspect of society that public relations
cannot function in isolation and succeed. Thus placing greater emphasis on models that are a misfit in the culture will only lead to uncertainty and inefficiency of the public relations practice in that region. Bardhan (1996) states that in Asia, culture creates the situation where “...symmetry is not an assumption or a possible goal” (p. 245). It is such facts that need to be highlighted to practitioners who are without reason feeling failure as they unsuccessfully force unsuitable models on to their public, similar to forcing a piece of one puzzle into a completely different puzzle set.

There is an opportunity to further consider the current global public relations’ practice and build on the four models to design models and theories suitable to the local business and cultural environment. Even Grunig (2001) suggests that it is, “...time to move on from the four models of public relations and develop a comprehensive theory that goes beyond the typology represented by the four models” (p. 29). The new development of theories that incorporate global public relations practices can then be tailored to suit the region and be incorporated into curriculum for students, ensuring that future practitioners are armed with practical based tools and are not in an ongoing pursuit to implement normative theories that may have little to no effect in their public relations’ environment.

The four models have offered public relations’ scholars to conduct effective comparative analyses of the public relations’ profession across the globe. Leichty (2003) makes an excellent observation and states that, “each cultural bias provides lenses for interpreting the world. Each way of life clearly sees what the other way of life does not see” (p. 280). These models have assisted in identifying public relations gaps and issues specific to a region. It is these gaps and issues that can now be addressed and new theories and models can be developed for practitioners who work in cultural environments that are radically different from the West, where these models were first introduced. Grunig’s (1984) models have served the public relations profession well and should be seen as the foundation of any new models that are developed for the practice of public relations.

van Ruler et. al. (2004) noticed that most studies, including studies in global public relations are often conducted by Western scholars and that professionals in non-Western regions tend not to discuss their profession amongst their peers. Lim et. al. (2005) concurs and highlights the lack of public relations models available to a non-Western practitioner, making it difficult to justify the practitioner’s contributions to senior management. This immediately strikes as an opportunity to move forward and work together in building effective global public relations practices. As more studies identify the clear differences in the practice of public relations, scholars and practitioners within the Asian region should network and collaborate to design and trial techniques that work for them and their public. By understanding and appreciating the reasons behind the differing practice of public relations, practitioners across the world can use this knowledge to foster relationships, develop integral business opportunities and achieve operational outputs that are beneficial for their culture and its people.
**Conclusions**

Using Grunig’s (1984) four models of public relations as the foundation for this paper, it is confirmed that the Asian region has its own unique approach to practicing public relations. Business practices in the Asian region also highlighted similar differences and justified the direct relationship existing between business practices and public relations practices in Asia. Further analysis revealed that cultural aspects have a major impact on the business practices, which in turn impact the public relations profession. Culture’s strong influence on business practices, has an effect on public relations practices, making the use of generic public relations models complex and unsuitable for the society so unlike the West. The study showed that like any other business function, public relations is also impacted by organisational and business setting.

Further research in the cumulative impact of culture and business practices on Asian public relations will assist practitioners around the globe to understand the reasoning behind this region’s unique set of public relations practices. To research this, it will be imperative to consider the elements of a country’s business practice that may also exist in its public relations practice and how salient a role business plays in a country’s public relations profession.

Scholars and practitioners in the Asian region will need to work together to develop models and theories that can stem from such research. Their models and theories can then be well-targeted for their society and ensure that the models such as two-way symmetrical are seen purely as normative.
References


