Multicultural Competency Training Model for Digital Publicists

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to develop and evaluate a multicultural competency training model for digital publicists. It is research and development which the researchers have divided the research process into 3 steps. Step 1: Developing a multicultural competency training model for digital publicists. Step 2: Evaluating the suitability of the developed multicultural competency training model for digital publicists. Lastly, step 3: Adapting a multicultural competency training model to developed digital publicists. Furthermore, the study found that the multicultural competence of digital publicists consisted of 4 competencies: 1) Digital Engagement Competency, 2) Dissemination Competency, 3) Facilitation Competency, and 4) Consulting Competency. Moreover, the results of the developed multicultural competency training model adaptation for digital publicists can be divided the assessment into 3 areas including, 1) Knowledge: the sample group has higher scores after training, 2) Skill: the sample group has the overall multicultural digital public relations skills at an excellent level, and 3) Attitude: overall, the sample group has a superb attitude.

Keywords: competency training model, multicultural, digital publicists

1. Introduction

Modern organizational operations have faced changes in both external and internal environments. Economic, political, social, and cultural environments are examples of external environments. Internal environments include the organization's method of operation, executive management, and human resources. However, the competency development of the organization is the most interesting because it enables a business to have the ability to compete with opponents in order to survive and succeed in accordance with the vision and mission of the organization. (Kannikar, Wannapiroon, & Nilsook, 2021)

Currently, it is the digital age, the world of boundless communication, with the emergence of various digital technologies. Many organizations are widely adapting their methods of public relations using such tools. Moreover, public relations can spread information quickly, which makes communication and public relations more widespread. People are able to consume news across the country, making multicultural communication plays an important role in present society (Archibald et al., 2021) in order to achieve the goals of the organization or for the benefit of presenting goods and services, as well as creating a good image of the organization and increasing the number of internet users around the world. The growth of the smartphone business market and the expansion of social media communication affect the news acknowledgement of corporates. As a result, the public relations process has changed from the past, which often disseminated information through radio, television, newspapers and magazines, causing public relations to change as well. Due to every organization pays attention to public relations because public relation is a part of the organization management. In addition, social media is used as a channel to present the organization's information to the target group. Thus, it has affected the public relations process of the organization and the current PR operation requires a lot of adjustment (Verma, 2015). Organizations have to adjust and change the disruptive format of public relations to enable the people or target groups to be informed of news, projects, or activities quickly, thoroughly, and efficiently with a suitable channel or method that is currently used for sending messages where the recipient can choose to receive the message according to the suitability of each person, especially on social media.

According to the mentioned reason, public relations need to be transformed from traditional public relations to digital public relations that use digital technology as a tool to support organizational operations. The researchers

regarded that the proactive public relations process is a suitable practice for all organizations in the digital era, the transition of various communication technologies; it can be planed for the organization's public relations to be effective publicity. Therefore, the researchers are interested in studying the development of a multicultural competency training model for digital public relations professionals.

2. Objective

1) To develop the multicultural competency training model for the developed digital publicists.

2) To evaluate the suitability of the developed multicultural competency training model for digital publicists.

3) To adapt the multicultural competency training model for the developed digital publicists.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Competency Training Model

Training means the process of organizing systematic educational activities with continuous processes that can develop skills and attitudes of the trainees to change in the desired direction. After training, trainees can apply the gained knowledge to the maximum benefit based on their needs. Besides, the motivated training which appropriates to the conditions of the participants will help achieve the practice goals (Tungsiripartporn, 2016) (Labunets et al., 2021). The studies of training have attracted many people whether it is research training in education, medical, local residents training in musculoskeletal therapy or cruciate ligament rehabilitation (Coulondre et al., 2022) or cybersecurity training (Chowdhury, Katsikas, & Gkioulos, 2022) and others. The term competency refers to the knowledge, skills and attributes required of a person to work successfully to have a performance that meets the specified criteria standards or higher (Kakati & Banerjee, 2021; Jones, Sander, & Booker 2013; Ilomäki, Kantosalo, & Lakkala 2011; Addysg Cymru, 2018). The researchers have analyzed and synthesized related documents and research papers which can be concluded that competency training refers to the process of organizing systematic educational activities with continuous processes that gains the knowledge, skills and attributes required of a person to work successfully to have a performance that meets the specified criteria standards or higher. According to the research study on the development of an online competency training model has discovered that there are researchers who have developed learning models to adapt to the change of digital technology and the change of the world including the epidemic of COVID-19. Examples, research on professional development and capacity reinforcement of government by providing training through an online simulation project (Zinchenko & Morgunova, 2022).

3.2 Multicultural

Multicultural competency refers to competence in building understanding about society, politics, economy, language, religious factors, race, religion, age, gender, social class, and education, which determines how different people's thought, believe, feeling, and behavior. Especially on the occasion of Thailand stepping into cooperation in the ASEAN community (Jones, Sander, & Booker 2013; Archibald et al., 2021; Kannikar, Wannapiroon, & Nilsook, 2021). Researchers have studied the empathy and connection of multicultural learning in the virtual classroom (Ayuningtyas, Akun, and Retnowati 2021) and also examined the diversity of people's cultures. It showed that people have cultural diversity and intellectual complexity.

3.3 Digital Publicist

Digital publicist is the capable people who build good relationships between individuals and the public, both internally and externally. They must be a knowledgeable person and have excellent communication skills whether it is in aspects of the press, PR media production, and media relations. More than that, they must be a person with a good image because they are the representative of the organization in contacting with the media to create understanding for the people or the target group to understand the work of the organization (Jones, Sander, & Booker 2013; Navarro et al., 2020). In order to enhance people to become good publicists for the digital world, there are researchers who conduct comparative research in the field of public relations education development. The research focuses on the competency of digital public relations. It shows that information technology skills and digital literacy are essential to future success. To understand the development of PR studies, the authors compared the statistics of students of two higher education institutions. The results showed that there is a strong demand for public relations education (Ilria et al., 2019), and researchers examined the communication and public relations tools used in the year 2015-2021 to present highlights of each tool and its evolution in each era (Albuquerque & Silva, 2021).

However, previous studies showed that there are researchers review for answers about training, developing skills using different strategies, the evolution of communication and public relations tools from past to present.

Additionally, many people interested in multicultural culture or multi-lingual and multi-national culture.

4. Research Method

4.1 Scope of Research

The scope of this research involved 21 experts to assess and comment on the developed training model in 3 areas: public relations specialists, Information and communication technology specialists, and learning management specialists. This is research that uses in-depth interviews between experts with detailed questions in each issue.

The population and the sample group are undergraduate students from Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-ok.

Sample group is 73 undergraduate students in Multimedia Technology Department from Rajamangala University of Technology Tawan-ok.

4.2 Research Process

Step 1: Developing a multicultural competency training model for digital publicists.

Development of a multicultural competency training model for digital publicists is a study, analysis, and synthesis of research papers related to development, training models, competency training, multicultural, and digital public relations to obtain the meaning, elements, procedures, methods, assessments and other information relevant to the development of the training model which has the development process as shown in the following figure.
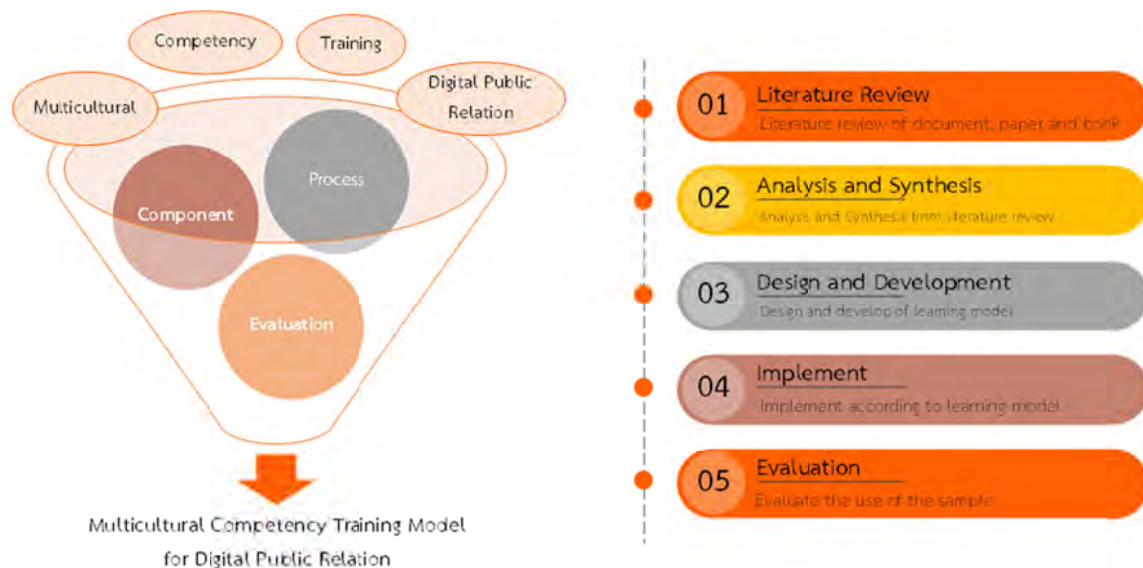

Figure 1. The process of the multicultural competency training model development for digital publicists

Step 2: Evaluating the suitability of the multicultural competency training model for digital publicists.

The suitability assessment was based on an in-depth interview of 21 experts, divided into 3 groups including Group 1: public relations publicists, group 2: information technology officers, and group 3: multicultural experts. The study aims to determine the validity by analyzing the Index of item Objective Congruence (IOC) to complete the content. The evaluation criteria are divided into 3 aspects according to the composition of the digital public relations multicultural competency.

Step 3: Adapting a multicultural competency training model for digital publicists.

The adaptation of multicultural competency training model for digital publicists initiates with the development of a competency course namely "Multicultural Competency Training for Digital Publicists" which aims to develop 4 competencies that are designed to be: digital engagement competency (participator), dissemination competence (disseminator), facilitation competency (facilitator), and consulting competency (advisor). The learning content and model are defined in accordance with the design and development processes. The developed training model was applied with online training using various digital tools to drive every learning and activity process which
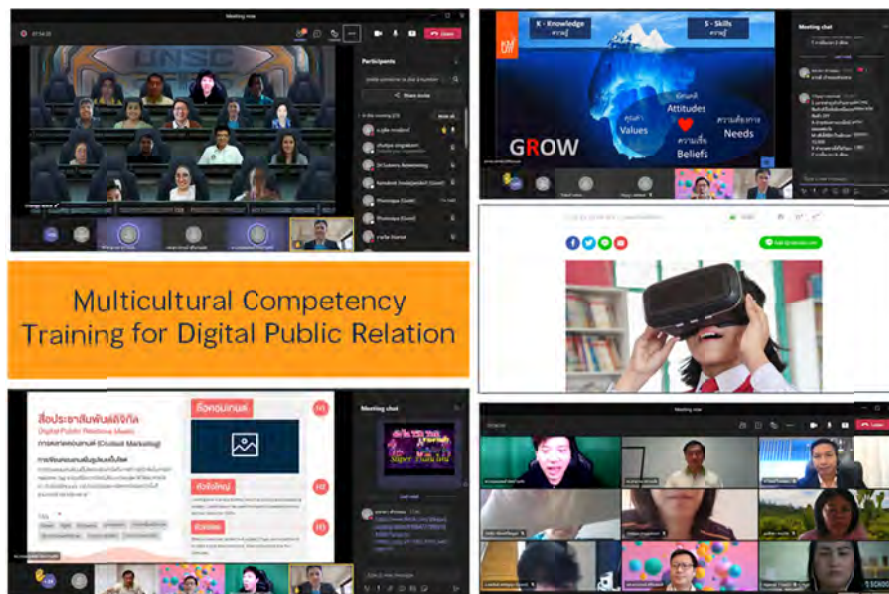
shown as the picture below.

Figure 2. Multicultural competency training

5. Result

5.1 Multicultural Competency Training Model for Digital Publicists

Developed multicultural competency training model for digital publicists consists of 3 main components: training management process, digital technology tools used in training management, and assessment of digital publicist competence, which has details as the following picture.

Figure 3. Multicultural competency training for digital publicists

Part 1: Learning management activity is a multicultural competency training for digital public relations professionals which divided into 5 main steps and consists of 10 sub-steps as shown in Table 1.

Part 2: The digital technology tools used in multicultural competency training for digital public relations officers are classified according to their use in each training process. Communication tools; Google Meet, Zoom, publishing and promotion tools; Facebook, YouTube, Wordpress, digital PR tools; Photoshop, Iilastator, Kinemaster, YouTube, Search Tools; Google Search, and so on have been chosen by the researcher for use in the research.

Part 3: Multicultural competency of Digital Publicists can be divided into four competencies, each of which can be further subdivided into 28 components.

1) Digital Engagement Competency (Participant): An important competency in which a person must be aware of current events or situations by participating and cooperating in a variety of fields, including the formation of networks both internal and external organization.

2) Dissemination Competency (Disseminator): A person must have knowledge and ability to analyze news, use language and produce media using various tools appropriately for presenting accurate and impartial information.

3) Facilitation Competency (Facilitator): A person may provide advice or assistance in a variety of disciplines, such as education or supporting in activities for other individuals or organizations.

4) Consulting Competency (Advisor): In order to become a multicultural digital public relations officer, they must not only be self-aware and competent, but they must also be able to provide advice to others.

Table 1. Explanations of the multicultural competence of digital publicists

Competencies	Knowledge/Skill/Attribute	
Digital Engagement Competency (Participant)	1)	Participation in the development of the organization's digital public relations strategy.
	2)	Participation in communication of organizational vision, mission, and policy.
	3)	Capacity to collaborate as a team, as well as flexibility and adaptability also interacting with people and listening to their points of view.
	4)	Participation in crisis management and communication.
	5)	Participation in the development of connections with members of the digital association's community.
	6)	Participation in the development of connections with members of the digital association's community.
	7)	Participation ability as a Thai citizen to convey Thai culture worldwidely.
Dissemination Competency (Disseminator)	1)	Competency to utilize proper language for public relations.
	2)	Competency to write news for digital public relations.
	3)	Data analy ability for digital distribution and public relations.
	4)	Ability to communicate effectively through digital media.
	5)	Ability to design, prepare, and create digital media for proper publication.
	6)	Social media is utilized correctly to communicate information.
	7)	Accountable to oneself and society for providing accurate, fair, and impartial information.
Facilitation Competency (Facilitator)	1)	Capability of disseminating and introducing various information via digital media.
	2)	Proper computer capability to aid in different tasks related to the responsibilities.
	3)	Providing information services to individuals and other organizations properly and exactly.
	4)	Capability of explaining and providing information and facts to increase operational comprehension.
	5)	Capability of foreign languages to communicate in order to provide information.
	6)	Providing individuals or organizations with support or training on digital technology gadget usages.
	7)	In public relations, delivering varied information via digital media should make it easier for people with disabilities, the elderly, and youngsters.

Consulting Competency (Advisor)	1)	Have consulting and receiver analysis skills in mass communication.
	2)	Capable of working with others, understanding others' sentiments in order to comprehend the feelings and needs of the target culture.
	3)	Be dependable; this creates a positive picture of the company in the digital organization system.
	4)	Understand research and assessment in order to develop counseling recommendations for implementation.
	5)	Communication skills in persuasive mass communication.
	6)	There is an operational interaction between the public and media relations.
	7)	Discipline, punctuality, excitement, self-confidence, decision-making boldness, and dedication to work

Table 2. Contents of the multicultural competency training course for digital public relations publicists

Training Contents	Knowledge	Skill	Attribute
Digital Engagement Competency (Participator)			
An organization's digital public relations strategy		✓	
Organizational vision, mission, and policy principles	✓		
News presentation of current situations/events in the economy, society, and environment with a sense of social responsibility	✓		
Crisis management and communication management	✓		
Relationships formation with the organization's members/community	✓		
Cooperation networks inside the country and global.	✓		
Participation as a Thai citizen to convey Thai culture worldwidely	✓		
Dissemination Competency (Disseminator)			
Competency to utilize proper language for public relations	✓		
Competency to write news for digital PR	✓		
Data analy ability for digital distribution and public relations		✓	
Public and media relations operations	✓		
Ability to design, prepare, and create digital media for proper publication	✓		
Social media is utilized correctly to communicate information		✓	
Facilitation Competency (Facilitator)			
Proper public relations for duty performance	✓		
Proper computer capability to aid in different tasks related to the responsibilities		✓	
Providing information services to individuals and other organizations properly and exactly	✓		
Capability of explaining and providing information and facts to increase operational comprehension		✓	
Capability of foreign languages to communicate in order to provide information			
Consulting Competency (Advisor)			
Consulting	✓		
Capable of working with others, understanding others' sentiments in order to comprehend the feelings and needs of the target culture.			✓
Be dependable; a positive picture of the company			✓
Research and assessment	✓		
Investigation and evaluation of the consulting to develop the guidline for an implementation	✓		

5.2 Results of the Suitability Assessment of the Multicultural Competency Training Model for Digital Publicists

The suitability assessment of the multicultural competence training model for Digital Publicists was separated into three categories: method, digital technology used, and evaluation results. All three evaluations were suitable and met all of the assessment requirements.

Table 3. Results of the suitability assessment of the multicultural competency training model for digital publicists

No.	Competency	IOC	Review
1	Competency 1 Digital Engagement Competency	0.92	Appropriate
2	Competency 2 Dissemination Competency	0.99	Appropriate
3	Competency 3 Facilitation Competency	0.94	Appropriate
4	Competency 4 Consulting Competency	0.96	Appropriate
Overview		0.95	Appropriate

5.3 Adaptation Result

Researchers split the examination of multicultural competency of publicists into three areas utilizing the multicultural competency training model. To begin, 1) Knowledge: the researchers assessed the samples' knowledge before and after process. After training, the scores were higher than before training. Second, 2) Skill: the researchers established evaluation criteria for the sample group to exercise practical skills. Following the training based on the proposed curriculum, the sample group's overall multicultural digital public relations abilities were found to be extremely good. Finally, 3) Attitude: the researchers requested the sample group to provide feedback on the designed curriculum, which assesses their attitudes in five areas: knowledge transfers, content, and online training styles, activities, and application of information and abilities at work. Overall, the attitude of the sample group was highly positive.

5.3.1 Results of the Digital Public Relations Competency Assessment of Publicists in Terms of Knowledge

Table 4. Results of the digital public relations competency assessment of publicists (Knowledge)

Assessment	n	Total Score	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	t-test
Pre-trained	73	20	6.66	1.69	32.02
Post-trained	73	20	16.99	1.20	

** Statistically significant is at 0.05.

From the table showed the results of the digital public relations competency assessment of publicists (Knowledge), The pre-training test was scored at ($\bar{x}$ = 6.66, S.D. = 1.69) and the post-training test was scored at ($\bar{x}$ = 16.99, S.D. = 1.20). To conclude that the post-training score was higher than pre-training, statistically significant at the 0.05.

5.3.2 Results of the Digital Public Relations Competency Assessment of Publicists in Terms of Skill

Scoring criteria of the digital public relations competency in terms of skills was an interpretation criterion which divided into 5 ranges: 0-7 (very poor skill), 8-10 (poor skill), 11-13 (moderate skill), 14-16 (good skill), and 17-20 (excellent skill).

Table 5. Results of the digital public relations competency assessment of publicists (Skill)

Sequence	Skill Assessment Score	Interpretation
Overall	17.06 scores	Excellent

5.3.3 Results of the Digital Public Relations Competency Assessment of Publicists in Terms of Attitude

It is data analysis on trainees' attitudes assessment towards a multicultural competency training model for digital publicists.

Scoring criteria of the digital public relations competency in terms of attitude was an interpretation criterion which divided into 5 ranges, 4.50-5.00 (excellent attitude), 3.50-4.49 (good attitude), 2.50-3.49 (moderate attitude), 1.50-2.49 (poor attitude), and 1.00-1.49 (very poor attitude).

Table 6. Results of the digital public relations competency assessment of publicists (Attitude)

No.	Assessment item	Average	S.D.	Attitude level
1	Knowledge transfer	4.89	0.46	Excellent
2	Content	4.65	0.59	Excellent
3	Online training format	4.42	0.60	Good
4	Activities	4.65	0.59	Excellent
5	Application of information and abilities at work	4.65	0.59	Excellent
	Overall	4.65	0.06	Excellent

6. Conclusion

The researchers designed a multicultural competency training model. It is a training management method that may promote and develop people's ability to become digital public relations officers. This is due to the fact that the training strategy was evaluated and approved by professionals in public relations, information and communication technology, and learning management before being adopted in a multicultural competency training program to enhance digital public relations officers. The results obtained from the study were satisfactory. The trainees were assessed on four competencies: Digital Engagement Competency, Dissemination Competency, Facilitation Competency, and Consulting Competency. It showed that the multicultural competency training model developed by the researchers can be used to develop the competence of Digital Publicists and help the training management to be more efficient and up-to-date.

7. Discussion

The developed multicultural competency training model for digital public relations officers has a five-step training process, the training activities are organized online, therefore, various digital technologies are applied to manage the learning to provide participants with the 4 core competencies and 28 sub-element characteristics. The result of suitability assessment of the developed model is appropriate in the overall aspect at an excellent level. The researchers divided the assessment of the multicultural digital public relations officer competency into 3 areas. The first aspect, knowledge, it was found that the sample group had higher scores after training than before the training. The second aspect, skill, it was found that the sample group had the overall multicultural digital public relations skills at a good level. Last aspect, attitude, the sample group had an excellent attitude.

The developed multicultural competency training model for Digital Publicists has a five-step training process: 1) survey and problem determination, 2) planning and formulation, 3) message and tool selection, 4) operation and communication, 5) evaluation and application. Due to the training is an online event, various digital technologies are used to manage the learning in order to improve participant digital public relations competency. The driving process of training, training tools, and evaluation are consistent with the research (Darawsheh, Chard, and Eklund 2015; Sharakhina and Trubnikova 2018). If researchers wish to implement a multicultural competency training model for digital publicists in the future, it can be applied in various fields. The researchers examined the results of the created multicultural competence training model for digital public relations officers with a small sample of students in this study. Adapting the developed model to practice can attract other groups, such as a group of professors in university and organizations. As a result, the researchers advised individuals doing future study to explore and use the model with other samples. Furthermore, the selection of digital technology tools to manage learning according to a multicultural competence training model for digital public relations officers, numerous digital technology tools are employed in various activities as shown. Those interested in undertaking further study may utilize tools different than those offered. However, this should be evaluated adequately, otherwise the existing and useable agency or private resources should be considered.

Acknowledgments

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