

DEVELOPING A PARADIGM OF INTEGRATED MORAL COMMUNICATIONS TO ENHANCE THE IMAGE OF THE ROYAL THAI POLICE

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Abstract

“Developing a Paradigm of Integrated Moral Communications to Enhance the Image of the Royal Thai Police” is the prime research focus of this study. The research emphasizes a communicative strategy used to publicize good governance of The Royal Thai Police. The study is based on current public awareness and perceptions of the Royal Thai Police.

This research is primarily qualitative. The results of the study are derived from In-depth interviews, focus group interviews and public polls on public awareness and perceptions of the Thai police force during 2003 – 2006. The findings indicate that the general public has negative perceptions towards the Royal Thai Police. The negative perceptions include bureaucratic and centralized management systems, high ranking police officers interfered with political authorities, the Thai police force losing ground to provide evidence of their effectiveness and public responsibility, and the Thai police force being subject to corruption and being involved in illegal businesses.

In order to enhance the image and improve institutional governance of The Royal Thai Police, perceptions and attitudes towards the general public among Thai police must be changed by encompassing qualities, positive thinking, public spirit, and dedication to public services. The research findings also point out that “the ideal policeman” should possess the following characteristics: gregariousness, service mind, nobility, high competence and omnipresence.

A process of enhancing the image of The Royal Thai Police as a good governance organization, must aim at achievable and concrete results, and focus on both the internal and the external. The internal objective seeks to improve competency of the police force, while the external perspective should focus on publicizing the improvements of institutional governance.

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Strategies for the development initiative to enhance image and improve institutional governance of The Royal Thai Police consist of six main elements, namely Human Resource Strategy, Public Relations Strategy, Promoting Events, Information Strategy, Working Strategy and Evaluation of Strategy. A paradigm entitled “Good Governance” has been developed to initiate moral communication and enhance the image of The Royal Thai Police. The Good Governance Paradigm consists of thirteen vital aspects: Good Will, Outside-In Planning, Omnipresence, Dedication, Gregariousness, Obligation, Value Creation, Efficiency, Reconciliation, Nobility, Accessibility, Network, Communications, and Ethics.

INTRODUCTION

Images of the Royal Thai Police have been negatively perceived for so long that they have to be changed. Public relations communications currently carried out by the police’s PR officers have not attained a level of effectiveness. Mass media frequently criticized the Royal Thai Police in many aspects, including centralized management system, a lack of public spirit and services, being involved in illegal business, and being interfered with political authorities. Looking at the concepts and strategies of integrated marketing communications (IMC), employed among marketers and marketing communication experts, the researcher has come up with a new IMC. Instead of IMC standing for integrated marketing communications, it stands for integrated moral communications in this study, meaning that the Royal Thai Police PR officers have to find ways to communicate morality and ethics among the Thai police force in order to reverse negative perceptions and enhance positive images of the Royal Thai Police. In order to come up with effective integrated moral communications to enhance positive images of the Royal Thai Police, a research has been designed to acquire suggestive ideas from several sectors involved.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the research include: (1) to analyze the image of the Royal Thai Police, (2) to find ways to improve morality and ethics among

the Thai police force, (3) to devise an IMC strategy to enhance a positive image of the Royal Thai Police, and (4) to fabricate an IMC paradigm to build a positive image of the Royal Thai Police. It is hoped that the findings of this research will improve services of the Thai police force and strengthen cooperation between the public and the police force in order to achieve desirable social order.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to come up with appropriate questions in the collection of data in the research, a literature review has been conducted in several theoretical areas. The first theoretical construct reviewed is “image”, including definitions of image, types of image, components of image, functions of image, and image building. An image is a perceptual picture resulting from a combination of objective facts and personal judgments. Image is important for corporate success and sustainability. Actions and communications are integral parts of image building. Those who are responsible for image building have to be concerned with corporate conduct as well as corporate communications. A corporation with a good image can attract employees, suppliers, customers, and the public.

The second construct is “morality”, including good governance, ethics, and a police code of ethics. Good governance encompasses legality, legitimacy, transparency, participative democracy,

honesty, morality, ethics, and accountability. The police code of ethics consists of integrity, merit, morality, humanity, and justice. Dimensions of the police code of conduct are governance, national security, public service, process of justice, legality, work administration, legitimate authority, duty, responsibility, dignity, unity, and co-operation.

The third construct is “integrated marketing communications”, including communication paradigms, definitions of IMC, the role of IMC, strategic IMC planning, and IMC tools. IMC is a process of planning and implementing communication strategies, using several persuasive communication approaches to induce certain attitudes and behavior among target audiences. In order to effectively communicate, a communication campaign has to employ both mass media and non-mass media communications. It has to include both above-the-line and below-the-line communications. An effective communication campaign must utilize several IMC tools beyond widely-used advertising and public relations.

The fourth construct is “cultural change”, including definitions of culture, change management, drivers of cultural changes, hurdles of cultural changes, and components of cultural changes. Culture is behavioral norms practiced widely among members of any society or group. Its components are style, values, norms, standards, philosophies, beliefs, traditions, reward and punishment systems, and procedures. Components of cultural changes are need assessment, executive directions, corporate infrastructure, internal collaterals, training, and evaluation. Trust is a locus of success in change management. Leadership, courage, effective human resource management, vision, and communication are key drivers of change management. Fear, a lack of willingness to take responsibility, a feeling of being insecure, and corporate politics are hurdles of change management.

The last construct reviewed is public “policy and public services”, including definitions of public policy, process of public policy design, implementation of public policy, and of the Royal Thai Police public policy. Public policy comprises courses of action adopted by public offices in response to public problems. Six steps to be taken in the process of policy design are: policy formation, policy presentation, policy adoption, policy implementation, policy evaluation, and policy revision. When implementing public policy, one has to be concerned with the following factors: policy standards and objectives, inter-organizational communication and reinforcing activities, resources, characteristics of implementing agencies, political and socioeconomic conditions, and disposition of implementers.

In addition to a review of theoretical constructs, the researcher has also reviewed images of the Royal Thai Police as portrayed in several public pollings, most of which indicate a negative image perceived by the public.

METHODOLOGY

The research is primarily qualitative. Data collection has been conducted by means of depth interviews among communication experts, high ranking officers involved in PR communication campaigns for the Royal Thai Police, politicians on the Police Commission, and media editors working in police and in social sectors. Focused group interviews were also conducted among PR practitioners working in the Royal Thai Police, media reporters working at police station beats and in social sectors, high ranking police officers, and low ranking police officers. The total number of key informants in the depth interviews is 27, and the total number of participants in the focused group interviews is 50.

The data collected were analyzed in four areas, including (1) quality of services provided by the police force, (2) working process of the police force, (3) campaigns needed to cultivate ethics and morality among police officers, and (4) communication strategies needed to enhance a positive image of the Royal Thai Police.

FINDINGS

Perceived Images of the Royal Thai Police

The image of the Royal Thai Police is mainly perceived to be negative. Services provided to the public are poor; the police are more likely to exert authority than to protect the public; they are involved in illegal business; they receive bribes from people who violate laws; they practice nepotism and favoritism in place of the merit system; they support corrupt politicians; they are hard to access; and when working, they use the controlling concept rather than the supporting concept.

An Ideal Policeman

An ideal policeman needs to adhere to the following principles: nobility, justice, equality, legitimacy, honesty, service mind, empathy, gregariousness, ideology, omnipresence, competent skills, good personality, modernization, effectiveness, responsiveness, and modesty. A desirable policeman is one who has good will, public spirit and dedication.

Cultivating the attitude of the Police

There should be a campaign to cultivate and formulate the right attitudes of policemen, so that they can perform their duties accordingly. Policemen have to be aware that their duties are to serve and to protect the public. They should be happy to perform their duties while thinking that the public and the police force are fellow

citizen. Policemen should have positive attitudes towards the public, so that they will happily perform their duties. Policemen should take pride in their jobs and be willing to do their work while complying with the code of conduct, namely being honest, ethical, dedicated, sacrificing, modest, fair, and gregarious. Policemen should not abuse their authority and violate the core principle of human rights; that is, they have to regard any person as an innocent person until proved guilty.

Principles of the Police Ethics

Policemen must adhere to the principles of **Brahmvihara See**: four boundless States of Mind including (1) **maitri**: loving-kindness, (2) **karuna**: compassion-thinking of helping others to get free from suffering, (3) **mudita**: sympathetic joy and (4) **upeksa**: indifference or equanimity. They must be honest and have career integrity. They must be willing to sacrifice to endure any hardship of their tasks, and perform their jobs diligently with discipline and justice. They should be nice to the public and dedicatedly create values for the public that they serve.

Communications of the Police Image

In order to achieve effectiveness, image communications practiced by the PR department of the Royal Thai Police should have the following elements: (1) based on solid truth, (2) carried out by communication professionals, (3) being able to manage crisis communications, (4) networking with communities, (5) utilizing several IMC tools, (6) having good media relations, (7) having effective internal communications, (8) having strategic external communications, (9) knowing how to publicize police heroes, and (10) having sensitive feedback systems in order to listen to public criticism and evaluation.

Principles of Image Communication Campaign

One cannot have an effective external image communication campaign, unless one has an effective internal communication to promote ethics, a code of conduct, and a belief in the importance of image in corporate success and efficiency. After a successful internal campaign, one must use several persuasive communication approaches—mass media and non-mass media communications, above-the line and below-the-line communications. It should be noted that a communication campaign will be effective only when all members of the police force perform their duties with efficiency and utmost potential. An organizational reform is needed; that is, there must be infrastructure investment and innovative human resource management. Communication professionals should be hired to work in the PR department of the Royal Thai Police. Certain tasks that cannot be carried out by police officers should be outsourced.

Strategies of Integrated Image Communications

The first strategy to be concerned with is human resources. Those who work in the PR department should be communication professionals. The head of the department should be a communication generalist who is well versed in many disciplines of communication, regardless whether it is advertising, public relations, event organization, direct marketing, and face-to-face interpersonal communications. The existing officers should be trained and developed, so that they possess the competency in communication and media literacy.

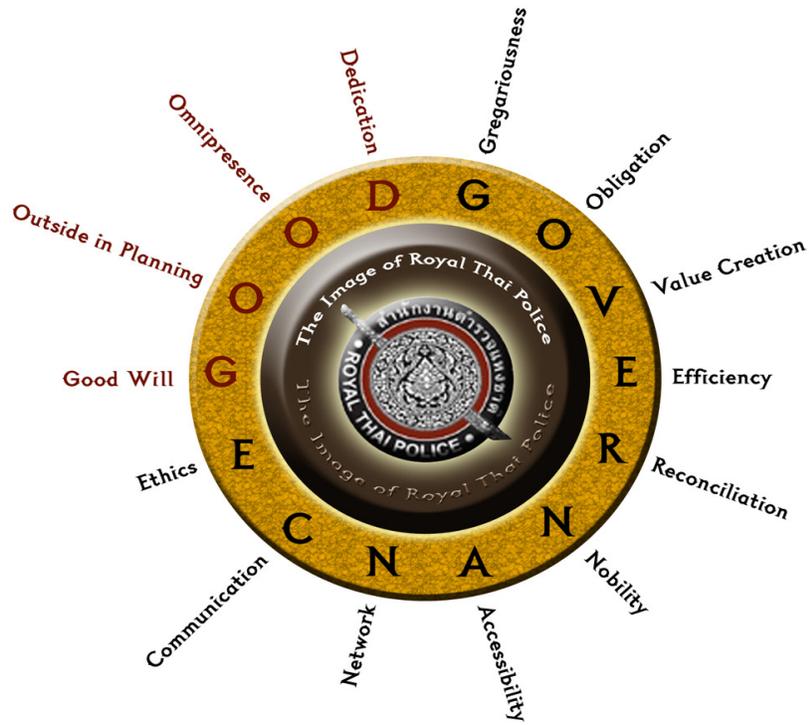
The second strategy is behavior and action strategy. In order to have good contents to communicate to the public and a good image prevail thereafter, policemen must learn how to behave and how to act, so that there are sufficient good deeds to publicize.

The third strategy will be a communication strategy. With communication professionals and with ample good deeds performed by the police force, a good IMC can be conceived. Several IMC tools should be selected and implemented appropriately. The image campaign to promote morality and ethics of the Royal Thai Police should be multidimensional and longitudinal.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a paradigm of integrated moral communications has been fabricated, entitled “GOOD GOVERNANCE”. The paradigm consists of the following constructs: Good Will, Outside-in Planning, Omnipresence, Dedication, Gregariousness, Obligation, Value Creation, Efficiency, Reconciliation, Nobility, Accountability, Networking, Communication, and Ethics. All these constructs form a framework that should serve as a guiding star for all police officers to know how to behave, to act, to perform, and to blow the horn to enhance an image of morality and ethics of the Royal Thai Police.

Good Governance Paradigm



Good Governance
The Royal Thai Police

Good Governance to Build a Good Image of Morality For The Royal Thai Police.

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