

Ke Xue  
Sherry Xueer Yu  
Mingyang Yu

# The History of Public Relations in China



上海交通大学出版社  
SHANGHAI JIAO TONG UNIVERSITY PRESS



Springer

# The History of Public Relations in China

Ke Xue · Sherry Xueer Yu · Mingyang Yu

# The History of Public Relations in China



Ke Xue  
School of Media and Communication  
Shanghai Jiao Tong University  
Shanghai, China

Sherry Xueer Yu  
Willkie Farr and Gallagher LLP  
Washington, DC, USA

Mingyang Yu  
Antai College of Economics  
and Management  
Shanghai Jiao Tong University  
Shanghai, China

ISBN 978-981-19-4092-7      ISBN 978-981-19-4093-4 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-4093-4>

Jointly published with Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press  
The print edition is not for sale in China Mainland. Customers from China Mainland please order the print book from: Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press.

© Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press 2022

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use.

The publishers, the authors, and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publishers nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publishers remain neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.  
The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

# Preface

Being among the first generation of scholars studying public relations in China, we have first-hand experience in the development of public relations in China in the past 40 years. The rapid developments and changes in recent times expedited the development of public relations in China, while public relations helped touching this historical era up.

In 1978, Major Debate on What Constitutes Truth and the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee marked the start of more robust and dynamic academic discussions. A large number of academic subjects, including public relations, were introduced into China. With economic liberalization and marketization, enterprises began to utilize public relations tools and services extensively. After Reform and Opening-up, corporate public relations departments and professional public relations firms started to appear in Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. However, the lack of talents and the absence of applicable theories made the public relations field realize the importance of education and research. As the result, in 1985, Shenzhen University established the first public relations major in China and published the first set of public relations books. Soon, the first provincial public relations association was established in Shanghai in 1986. In 1987, the China Public Relations Association was formally established. Therefore, we define the period from 1978 to 1987 as the initial stage of public relations in China. Public understanding of the concept of public relations was still relatively vague at this stage, and professional activities were largely limited to advertising and promotions. The level of expertise and engagement in academia was low. Personnel training was rudimentary. The research conducted wasn't in-depth and the few organizations and associations in existence weren't functional. However, this stage was valuable as the foundation for future development.

We defined the period from 1988 to 1996 as the exploration stage of Chinese public relations. During this period, a large number of foreign public relations books were introduced, many scholars travelled abroad to attend various international public relations conferences, and a large number of well-known international public relations figures, including the chairman of the International Public Relations Association, was

invited to visit and give lectures. Many of the world's top public relations companies set up offices in China. A variety of public relations textbooks were published to meet the market's needs, and several professional public relations newspapers were launched. Public relations associations have been established in all provinces and many cities across the country. A diverse array of training was organized, and different competitions were held. Although the standards and regulations were still often not well articulated, the "PR fever" was a critical period in developing public relations in China. This practical interest also helped propel the theoretical research forward. The State Education Commission officially approved Sun Yat-sen University to set up an undergraduate major in public relations, and since then, public relations training has also been offered at the graduate level at renowned institutions like Fudan University—which helped define public relations as an academic discipline. Since 1988, after several national meetings of public relations organizations, the function of the associations has been better clarified, which also helped in creating a set of professional norms. The popular TV series "PR girls", although having created some misunderstandings about the disciplines, also played a positive role in improving public understanding of public relations. With the convening of the 1996 China International Public Relations Conference, the popularization of public relations in China was completed.

From 1997 to 2011, China's economy developed rapidly, with frequent occurrences of significant events. Beijing's bid and hosting of the Olympic Games, Shanghai's bid and hosting of the World Expo, China's accession to the WTO, the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong and Macao back to China, and the scientific and technological revolution triggered by the Internet have all provided a broader stage for China's public relations, which thrived in all mediums including government, hospital, police, non-profit organizations, among others, in addition to the already-developed corporate public relations world. Awards such as Shanghai Public Relations Association and China International Public Relations Association awards have gained traction, which continued to this day. Chinese scholars began to publish in top international public relations journals such as *Public Relations Review*. The listing of BlueFocus showed that domestic public relations companies had now developed enough to compete with famous international public relations companies. Therefore, we define this stage as the growth period of public relations in China.

In 2012, the Chinese Communist Party proposed a switch from high-speed development to quality development, and started promoting concepts including the "Chinese dream", "Human Community with a Shared Future", and "Five Development Concepts". At the same time, China provided a new platform for development by emphasizing telling a good Chinese story and protecting the environment. These new developments show a new focus on public relations in China, this time at the national level. As the second largest economy in the world, China has realized the importance of public relations in addressing global challenges and asserting its place on the global stage. From theory to practical applications, from market pattern to enterprise, from city branding to all walks of life, China's public relations has become a significant force and an indispensable part of global public relations. Therefore, we define this stage as the development stage of China's public relations.

This book is structured according to the four stages discussed above.

In 2006, Prof. Yu Mingyang was honored to be elected executive vice president and director of the Academic Committee of the New China Public Relations Association. At the meeting, Mr. Su Qiucheng, the former deputy secretary-general of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, entrusted Prof. Yu to compile the History of Chinese Public Relations (1978–2007). After more than a year of hard work, Prof. Yu and his team overcame the difficulties of lack of records and missing materials, and the History of Chinese Public Relations (1978–2007), edited by Yu Mingyang, written by Wu Yanan, Wang Xigrui, Wen Jun and Yi Lijun, and edited by Ke Xue, was officially published by Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press, with a preface written by Su Qiucheng, Dean of Shanghai Jiao Tong University. It became the first book on the history of public relations in China.

In 2018, the History of Public Relations in China (1978–2018), edited by Yu Mingyang and Ke Xue, accompanied by Hu Yiwei, Wang Siyu, Chen Zhiren, Li Rou, Qu Chubo, and Wei Silun, was republished by Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press at the proposal of Liu Binjie, then president of China Public Relations Association, and Wang Doping, Executive Vice President and Secretary-General. The book is 625,000 words long and has been awarded one of the 40 representative books of the 40 years of public relations in China.

In 2021, with the help of the Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press editor Huang Qiang, we revised this book and translated it into English. This current English version is edited by Ke Xue and Mingyang Yu, with Sherry Xueer Yu contributing to the revision process and conducting English edits.

We hope that by publishing the English version of this book, more foreign public relations colleagues can understand the development of public relations in China. We hope this would spark more dialogues and discussions across the border and better the field of public relations as a whole.

Shanghai, China  
December 2021



Ke Xue

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>The Beginning of Public Relations in China (1978–1987)</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Background: Major Debate on What Constitutes Truth and the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee	1
1.1.1	A Major Debate on What Constitutes Truth: Ideological Preparation for the Development of Public Relations in China	1
1.1.2	Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee: Institutional Preparation for the Development of Public Relations in China	2
1.2	Introduction and “Import”	3
1.2.1	From Hong Kong and Taiwan to Mainland China	3
1.2.2	Shenzhen Special Economic Zone	4
1.3	Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical General: Public Relations of Large State-Owned Enterprises	5
1.3.1	The Beginning of Public Relations in Large State-Owned Enterprises	5
1.3.2	The Significance of Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical	6
1.4	Arrival of Foreign Public Relations Companies in China	7
1.4.1	Professional Public Relations Companies	7
1.4.2	Arrival of Foreign Public Relations Companies in China	8
1.5	The Beginning of Government Public Relations	9
1.5.1	Reform and Opening-Up and Government Public Relations	9
1.5.2	The Attempt of Chinese Government Public Relations	10
1.5.3	The Role of Government Public Relations	10
1.6	Shenzhen University: The Attempt at Public Relations Education	12
1.6.1	The Rise of Public Relations Education and Various Trainings	12



1.6.2	The Development of Public Relations Professional Education .....	13
1.7	Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant: Public Relations in Crisis .....	15
1.7.1	The Construction of Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant and the Emergence of Nuclear Crisis .....	15
1.7.2	Successful Use of Public Relations and the Resolution of Nuclear Crisis .....	17
1.8	Industry Organizations: Shanghai Public Relations Association and China Public Relations Association .....	18
1.8.1	The Rise of Local Public Relations Organizations .....	18
1.8.2	Establishment of the China Public Relations Association .....	19
	References .....	20
<b>2</b>	<b>Expansion of Public Relations in China (1988–1996) .....</b>	<b>23</b>
2.1	Public Relations in the South China Sea .....	23
2.1.1	The Characteristics of Government Public Relations .....	23
2.1.2	The Exploration of Chinese Government Public Relations .....	24
2.1.3	The Main Contents of the Government Public Relations During the Exploration Period .....	25
2.2	Corporate PR and CIS Boom .....	27
2.2.1	The Rise of Corporate PR .....	27
2.2.2	PR Helped Promoting Corporate Image .....	27
2.2.3	The Increased Popularity of CIS .....	29
2.3	Foreign PR Companies and Local PR Companies .....	30
2.3.1	The Arrival of Foreign PR Companies .....	30
2.3.2	The Beginnings of Local PR Companies .....	31
2.3.3	Difficult Exploration of the PR Market .....	32
2.4	Public Relations Theory and Education .....	34
2.4.1	Research and Exploration of Public Relations Theory .....	34
2.4.2	Conferences in China and Abroad .....	35
2.4.3	The Exploration of the First PR Schools .....	37
2.4.4	Demand for PR Textbooks .....	38
2.5	PR Media and Communication .....	38
2.5.1	Professional PR Newspapers .....	38
2.5.2	Radio and Television PR Communication .....	39
2.5.3	National Ten-Year Outstanding PR Enterprise Award .....	42
2.6	Professional Ethics .....	43
2.6.1	Meaning of Professional Ethics .....	43
2.6.2	Exploration of Professional Ethics in Public Relations in China .....	44
2.7	Public Relations for Non-profit Organizations .....	46
2.7.1	Public Relations of Medical Institutions .....	46
2.7.2	Public Relations of Educational Institutions .....	47

- 2.7.3 Non-profit Public Relations ..... 49
- 2.8 International Public Relations Congress ..... 51
  - 2.8.1 Establishment of China International Public Relations Association ..... 51
  - 2.8.2 International Public Relations Communication ..... 52
  - 2.8.3 International Public Relations Conference ..... 52
- References ..... 53
- 3 The Growth of Public Relations in China (1997–2011) ..... 55**
  - 3.1 The Return of Hong Kong and Macao and Government Public Relations ..... 55
    - 3.1.1 Public Relations During the Return of Hong Kong ..... 55
    - 3.1.2 Public Relations During the Return of Macao ..... 56
    - 3.1.3 “E-government” and Public Relations ..... 58
  - 3.2 WTO, Olympic Bid and International Public Relations: A New Era of “Hosting Games” ..... 61
    - 3.2.1 Joining WTO and Public Relations ..... 61
    - 3.2.2 Public Relations During Bidding and Hosting the Olympic Games ..... 62
    - 3.2.3 Public Relations During Expo China ..... 63
    - 3.2.4 APEC and Public Relations ..... 64
    - 3.2.5 Cultural Exchange and International Public Relations ..... 65
  - 3.3 SARS Crisis ..... 68
    - 3.3.1 Crisis Public Relations During SARS ..... 69
    - 3.3.2 Establishment and Improvement of Crisis Public Relations Mechanism ..... 71
    - 3.3.3 Establishment of Hospital Crisis Public Relations System ..... 73
  - 3.4 Media Competition Intensifies ..... 76
    - 3.4.1 TV Media Public Relations Competition ..... 76
    - 3.4.2 Online Media Public Relations ..... 80
  - 3.5 Fierce Competition in the PR Market ..... 82
    - 3.5.1 Fully Competitive PR Market ..... 82
    - 3.5.2 Localization of Foreign Public Relations Companies ..... 84
    - 3.5.3 Transformation of Local Public Relations Companies ..... 87
  - 3.6 Chinese Brands’ Long Journey: The Integration of Public Relations and Brand ..... 91
    - 3.6.1 Chinese Brands’ Long Journey ..... 91
    - 3.6.2 The Logic of the Ministry of Commerce ..... 92
    - 3.6.3 Chinese Brands’ Long Journey and Public Relations ..... 94
  - 3.7 Standardization of China’s Public Relations Industry ..... 95
    - 3.7.1 Standardization of Industry Organizations ..... 95
    - 3.7.2 Standardization of Practice Behavior ..... 104
    - 3.7.3 Standardization of Scientific Research and Education ..... 108

- 3.8 City Branding and Public Relations ..... 112
  - 3.8.1 City Image Communication ..... 112
  - 3.8.2 City Branding ..... 115
  - 3.8.3 City Branding and Public Relations ..... 120
- 3.9 Boosting Industrial Improvement Through Technology and the Internet ..... 121
  - 3.9.1 Viral Spread Based on Social Networks ..... 121
  - 3.9.2 Weibo and Online Public Opinion Public Relations ..... 123
- References ..... 126
- 4 Development of Public Relations in China (2012–2018) ..... 129**
  - 4.1 New Era, New Concept and New Development ..... 129
    - 4.1.1 Chinese Dream: From Concept to Realization ..... 129
    - 4.1.2 Five Development Concepts and Human Community with a Shared Future ..... 130
    - 4.1.3 Telling China’s Story and Creating an Image of a Major Country ..... 132
  - 4.2 Comprehensive Development of Government Public Relations .... 134
    - 4.2.1 Government Weibo ..... 134
    - 4.2.2 Government WeChat ..... 138
  - 4.3 Crisis Public Relations in New Media Era ..... 143
    - 4.3.1 Public Relations Response to Emergencies ..... 143
    - 4.3.2 Public Relations for Emergency Crisis: Government as the Main Body ..... 145
    - 4.3.3 Public Relations for Emergency Crisis: Enterprises as the Main Body ..... 148
  - 4.4 Social PR ..... 150
    - 4.4.1 Public Relations and Health Communication: The Ice Bucket Challenge ..... 150
    - 4.4.2 International Events and City PR: Chengdu Giant Panda Runs into London Olympics ..... 153
    - 4.4.3 PR Campaign: Chengdu’s “Giant Panda” Runs in London Olympics ..... 155
    - 4.4.4 Making Good Use of Positive PR: Mo Yan Wins Nobel Prize ..... 157
    - 4.4.5 Artificial Festival: 11.11 (Double 11) ..... 159
    - 4.4.6 Big Data and PR: The Empowerment of Technology for PR ..... 161
  - 4.5 City Public Relations Towards the International Stage ..... 164
    - 4.5.1 City Image Promo Film and City PR Image ..... 164
    - 4.5.2 Internet Famous Cities and New Media Boost ..... 171
  - 4.6 Increasingly Mature PR Theory and Practice ..... 172
    - 4.6.1 Public Relations Theory Research (Number of Papers, Research Fields) (2012–2017) ..... 172
    - 4.6.2 Public Relations International Exchange ..... 174

- 4.6.3 Corporate Public Relations Practice ..... 176
- 4.6.4 Maturity and Development of PR Companies ..... 177
- 4.7 Toward the Future: A Perspective on China’s Public Relations Development ..... 178
  - 4.7.1 Internationalization of the PR Market ..... 178
  - 4.7.2 Specialization of PR Practice ..... 179
  - 4.7.3 Technicalization of PR Means ..... 180
  - 4.7.4 Strategic Position of Public Relations ..... 180
  - 4.7.5 Scaling up PR Education ..... 181
  - 4.7.6 The Competition for PR Talent is Becoming More Fervent, and the Industry is Becoming More Self-Regulatory ..... 182
- References ..... 183
  
- Appendix A: Research and Analysis of Public Relations Industry (1978–2018) ..... 187**
- Appendix B Data Analysis of Public Relations Academic Research (1978–2018) ..... 207**
- Appendix C Chronology of Public Relations Development in China (1978–2018) ..... 221**

# Chapter 1

## The Beginning of Public Relations in China (1978–1987)



### 1.1 Background: Major Debate on What Constitutes Truth and the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee

#### *1.1.1 A Major Debate on What Constitutes Truth: Ideological Preparation for the Development of Public Relations in China*

On May 10, 1978, the internal journal of Party School of the CPC Central Committee first published the article “*Practice is the only criterion for testing truth*” in the 60th issue of *Theoretical Trends*, which was reviewed and approved by Yaobang Hu. On May 11, 1978, *Guangming Daily* published an article by a special commentator entitled “*Practice is the only criterion for testing truth*”. *Xinhua* reposted the article that day. On December 12, *People’s Daily* and *PLA Daily* reprinted the “*Great Debate on Truth*” that changed the nation’s fate (Meng, 2010). The article discusses Marxism-Leninism’s viewpoint of “practice comes first” and correctly points out that any theory should go through the test of practice. The article also states that Marxist theory is not a bunch of rigid dogmas and that new contents should be constantly added in practice.

Undoubtedly, this major debate of truth standards had a historical influence on new China’s reform and opening up. At the same time, it emancipated the Chinese people’s minds after thousands of years of feudal society and removed ideological obstacles for establishing Chinese public relations practices.

### ***1.1.2 Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee: Institutional Preparation for the Development of Public Relations in China***

From December 18 to 22, 1978, the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) marked the official start of the market-oriented reform of China's economic system (also known as Market-oriented Reform). The plenum achieved a historic turning point, corrected the long-standing mistake of "left leaning", shifted the Party's focus and the state's work to modern economic construction and prioritized the task of economic restructuring. The Third Plenary Session Bulletin of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) (approved on December 22, 1978) stated the intention to "begin serious reform of the economic management system and management methods under the new historical conditions and practical experiences". The Session criticized the "Two Whatevers", fully affirmed the need to master the scientific system of Mao Zedong completely and accurately, and spoke highly of the discussion on the issue that practice is the sole criterion for testing truth. The Session determined the guiding principles of emancipating the mind, seeking truth from facts, being united, and looking forward. The Session also decided to stop using the slogan "take class struggle as the key link", which does not apply to socialist social development, and made the decision to shift the focus of work to socialist modernization and carry out reform and opening up; formulated strategies for accelerating agricultural development; put forward the task of strengthening socialist democracy and perfecting socialist legal system; examined and solved several major unjust, false and erroneous cases in the history of the Party, and re-evaluated the merits, faults and wrongs of some important leaders.

After the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), CPC determined the basic state policy of "invigorating and opening to the outside world". From a closed and semi-closed economy, China turned to utilize the international environment of open economy, broke through the "left" thoughts and self-sufficient economy concept, and corrected the contradiction of self-reliance and opening to the outside. Through utilizing domestic and foreign resources and developing domestic and foreign markets, China made remarkable achievements. At the Central Work Conference held in April 1979, the new "readjusting, reforming, rectifying and improving" policy was adopted, prioritizing reform and opening up. Remarkable achievements were made in absorbing foreign investment, introducing technology and advanced management methods.

In conclusion: (1) Opening-up increased information sources and expanded transparency; (2) Opening-up made people break through the narrow-minded style of thinking; (3) Opening-up enabled people to have a comprehensive and scientific understanding of capitalist society; (4) Opening-up promoted the development of ideology and provided practical experience for the establishment of the theory of socialism with Chinese characteristics (Shi, 1994).

Under such a social background, public relations, this “exotic product”, took root, blossomed, and bore fruit in China.

## **1.2 Introduction and “Import”**

### ***1.2.1 From Hong Kong and Taiwan to Mainland China***

The introduction of modern public relations thought and practice into mainland China is inseparable from the prosperity and development of public relations in Hong Kong and Taiwan in the 1960s.

As early as in the 1960s, Hong Kong and Taiwan had been exposed to public relations thought because of the particularity of their political and economic development. In 1963, some branch companies of multinational companies in Hong Kong and Taiwan introduced the system and management model of the parent company. The public relations departments of enterprises grew rapidly, and the theory and practice of public relations became popular. Shih Hsin University, founded by Mr. Cheng Shewo, president of *Taiwan's World Daily*, was the first institution to introduce public relations courses. In 1963, the first professional public relations company, Waite Public Relations, appeared in Hong Kong. In 1975, Mr. Jingmeng (James) Wei from Taiwan founded the first professional Chinese public relations company, “United International Company”. From the 1960s to 1970s, public relations in Hong Kong and Taiwan entered the stage of professionalization. Especially in Hong Kong, some multinational companies set up public relations offices in their branches and employed professionally trained personnel. Their public relations activities were at a high level. Since then, various enterprises have set up their own public relations departments. Many professional public relations companies had emerged in society, and the number of public relations practitioners had increased rapidly. The public relations field in Hong Kong has been recognized for its unique social role.

While public relations in Hong Kong and Taiwan were booming, the political and economic situation in the mainland was also quietly changing. China came into contact with public relations in the late 1970s and early 1980s with China's opening to the world. After the introduction of “emancipating the mind and seeking truth from facts”, many new things were created or introduced from abroad as the focus of national work shifted to economic construction. Shenzhen and Hong Kong are only separated by water. After the reform and opening-up, the two places had a lot of economic and social exchanges. Public relations took the lead in the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. The opening-up results were primarily visible in some wholly foreign-owned and Chinese-foreign joint ventures, followed by joint ventures in the public relations departments in Guangzhou, Shantou, Foshan, and began to appear in Beijing and other places. The role of public relations in the hotel industry, restaurant industry and other industries was particularly outstanding. The initial development of public relations in mainland China started from the hotel industry



**Fig. 1.1** Deng Xiaoping at White Swan Hotel

because the hotel industry itself, as a new service industry, had its special operation mode.

In 1984, Guangzhou's China Hotel, Garden Hotel, Oriental Hotel, White Swan Hotel and other enterprises in the service department set up the public relations department. The Sino-foreign joint ventures Guangzhou's China Hotel and Beijing's The Great Wall Hotel, by virtue of their mature experience in public relations operation, had introduced a complete sense of public relations operation to the mainland and interpreted an excellent classic case of public relations with Chinese characteristics, making the two high-end hotels famous both at home and abroad (Yang, 2004) (Fig. 1.1).

### ***1.2.2 Shenzhen Special Economic Zone***

With its proximity to Hong Kong, Shenzhen is truly unique as it represents a window of China's reform and opening-up. However, the development of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone has not been smooth and easy. The construction of the Shenzhen Special Zone started from Shekou, which is difficult to imagine. At the beginning of the establishment of "Shekou Industrial Zone of China Merchants Bureau", the builders shouted out the slogan "*Time is money, efficiency is life*", but this famous slogan caused a nationwide outcry. CCTV's "The Age of Passion" reflected and explained the truth behind this slogan. Now, the slogan "*Time is money, efficiency is life*" still stands in Shekou Industrial Zone and has become one of the symbols of the spirit of the special zone.



By 1984, the Shenzhen Special Zone had begun to take shape. The good reform system and open social atmosphere of the Special Zone allowed various Hong Kong-invested companies to invest in Shenzhen and bring their management skills. At this time, public relations, emerging modern management science and operation method integrating communication science and management science, began to be introduced into the mainland coastal areas. Later, in Guangzhou and Beijing, a group of local Sino-foreign joint ventures and wholly foreign-owned enterprises set up special public relations departments directly following the overseas model, referring to the model of Shenzhen.

Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was a success. Over the years, Shenzhen and Hong Kong have made a significant contribution and played an irreplaceable role in any other area. They were the window for developing public relations in the mainland. In 1980, the Sino-Hong Kong joint venture Shenzhen's Huasen Architecture and Engineering Design Consulting Co., Ltd. became the first professional public relations company in China. Two years after, in 1982, Shenzhen's Bamboo Garden Hotel set up the first public relations department in mainland China.

### **1.3 Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical General: Public Relations of Large State-Owned Enterprises**

#### ***1.3.1 The Beginning of Public Relations in Large State-Owned Enterprises***

In September 1984, Guangzhou Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical General took the lead in setting up the Public Relations Department, which made a bold and beneficial attempt in carrying out the public relations practice and became a milestone event in the history of Chinese public relations. Later, Beijing Department Store also set up a public relations agency, which played an essential role in strengthening the connection between the company and the public (Lin, 1985).

On December 26, 1984, *Economic Daily* published a lengthy article titled “*Might redouble-Guangzhou Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical Factory's public relations work—Serious Study of Socialist Public Relations*”. It mainly introduced public relations, principles and guiding opinions. Then, 35 newspapers and magazines, including *Guangming Daily*, *Guangzhou Daily*, *Beijing Daily* and *Wen Wei Po*, reported or commented on public relations successively. Many reports and commentary articles have specifically introduced the status quo of the development of China's emerging public relations and elaborated the necessity and urgency of the rise and development of public relations in contemporary China. The publication of the editorial “*Serious Study of Socialist Public Relations*” marked the beginning of public relations in China. Meanwhile, as an authoritative official newspaper, *Economic Daily* affirmed public relations, which confirmed the legitimacy of public relations in China. At the same time, news media reports also played a positive role in people's correct

understanding and acceptance of public relations and the communication of public relations in China (Liang, 1985).

Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical used public relations to invest in reputation, improve the enterprise's reputation, shape a good corporate image so that consumers would trust their products, and then succeed in the commodity market. This actually conformed to the law of market change. They recognized the situation in the social and cultural environment at that time and won over the market.

### *1.3.2 The Significance of Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical*

Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical, as a large state-owned enterprise, began to set up the public relations department, which was a bold attempt to establish a new management system after the economic system reform. The initial attempt of public relations made the enterprises obtain win-win economic and social benefits and also opened the prelude of public relations activities of state-owned enterprises. This created a good social atmosphere for the formation of the concept of public relations. However, the establishment of the internal public relations department of the enterprises at that time was only in its beginnings. Therefore, the functions of the enterprise public relations departments did not fully play out (Lin, 1985).

We can see that the initial stage of Chinese public relations was mainly to introduce foreign public relations operation mode, operation procedures, management experience and specific practices into China. Due to the lack of knowledge and understanding of public relations at the beginning, the methods were often simply copied from or imitated foreign public relations. However, it was already a first step towards accepting foreign experience and technology with new ideas for the Chinese people undergoing reform and opening up.

#### The First Public Relations Department of China's State-owned Enterprise

In the early 1980s, Guangzhou Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical was a small factory producing a single product with extremely crude production equipment and an annual output value of less than RMB 200,000. In the 1990s, the factory had developed into a pharmaceutical production of hundreds of products with an annual value of over a billion RMB and became a large backbone enterprise with profits and taxes over ten million yuan.

Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical was the first state-owned enterprise in China to set up a public relations department. As a for-profit organization, the factory focused on the development of public relations. Its annual allocation of 1% of the total output value was known as "credit investment". This investment had brought enormous social and economic benefits for the Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical.

The public relations department of the enterprise was responsible for establishing and maintaining good relations with different fields. It presided over all kinds of

public relations affairs related to the enterprise's reputation, including introducing the enterprise to the society, showing videos of the enterprise to visitors, giving exquisite propaganda materials, showing guests around the factory, introducing scientific pharmaceutical methods, etc. The enterprise established information exchange through medical journals, academia and health circles, exchange with customers through mail, and timely feedback of public needs and opinions through more than 800 sales outlets throughout the country. All of this resulted in the enterprise gaining public support and trust.

Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical attached great importance to credit investment. The enterprise made full use of mass communication to establish an image for the enterprise. It focused on advertising on stadiums and TV and used the form of "prize questions" in newspapers to publish advertisements. The enterprise also used double-decker buses on the streets of Guangzhou for advertising. The enterprise expanded the "free advertising" channel, set up full-time staff and press contact, often wrote to the press, warmly welcomed the visiting reporters, truthfully reflected the situation, and often invited news staff to attend major activities of the enterprise.

Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical also invested in holding various forms of public relations activities, and sponsored social welfare undertakings, literature and art, sports and education events, funded Guangzhou's football team, set up the first light opera troupe in Guangdong Province, and set the first precedent for an enterprise to do cultural and sports undertakings in China. The enterprise also invited famous pharmacists, lecturers, domestic and international researchers, economists and retired management personnel to share their knowledge. The enterprise gained valuable medical information through closer ties with the research department and different panels, significantly improved its reputation, and enhanced public trust.

Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical quickly developed into one of China's three major pharmaceutical enterprises. The public relations strategy of Baiyunshan Pharmaceutical to win economic benefits by credit investment attracted the attention and imitation of many domestic enterprises (Xiong, 1993).

## **1.4 Arrival of Foreign Public Relations Companies in China**

### ***1.4.1 Professional Public Relations Companies***

A public relations company is a for-profit organization composed of public relations experts and professionals with specific professional expertise, specializing in public relations consulting or carrying out public relations activities and providing related services entrusted by customers (Huang & Chao, 2003).

Public relations companies vary in size depending on their business. The largest contemporary professional PR companies can have thousands of members, while

smaller PR studio firms may have only a few members working on a specific project or serving clients in a specific industry.

### ***1.4.2 Arrival of Foreign Public Relations Companies in China***

In the middle and late 1980s, with the gradual deepening of China's reform and opening up and the rapid development of socialist market economy, public relations in China started booming, which attracted well-known foreign public relations companies to enter China (Wu, 2002).

In October 1984, Hill Knowlton, the world's second-largest public relations firm, was the first to set up an office in Beijing. In 1985, Burson-Marsteller, the world's largest public relations company, entered China; In 1985, Frenchman Serge Dumont founded Interasia, the first Sino-foreign joint venture public relations company in China (Chen, 2011).

On August 31, 1985, Burson-Marsteller, the world's largest public relations company, signed an agreement with China News Development Company, a subsidiary of China's Xinhua News Agency, to provide public relations services for foreign organizations engaged in trade in China. Burson-Marsteller was the exclusive agent for its clients in China's public relations affairs. At the same time, Burson-Marsteller could also represent Chinese enterprises in overseas public relations affairs by introducing them to global public relations companies (Qi, 2002).

China Global Public Relations Company is the first public relations company in China.

In the mid-1980s, these famous multinational public relations companies began to try to enter the Chinese market based on the following strategic considerations:

- (1) Good prospects for China's development after reform and opening-up. The opening-up brought about by reform after the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China broke the solidification caused by isolation, rapidly expanded the horizons of the Chinese people, and enabled China to enter the international community with a new attitude. These actions aroused keen attention and a strong response from the international community. Forward-looking international public relations practitioners saw the Chinese leadership's commitment to reform, but also the strong potential of the Chinese market.
- (2) Maintaining their existing multinational customers. After the reform and opening-up, especially after the introduction of the planned commodity economy, China introduced a large number of foreign investments to develop socialist construction. In order to attract international capital inflow, from 1979 to 1988, China adopted a series of measures to reform the investment environment, including formulating and implementing more than 400 foreign economic laws and regulations and signing investment protection agreements with 23

countries with different social systems to protect foreign investors legally. Some famous multinational enterprises, such as Coca-Cola, entered China. The professional public relations companies that provide public relations services were unwilling to give up their high-quality clients' business in China, so they also tried to enter China.

- (3) Compete for new foreign customers on the Chinese market. Out of a lack of understanding of post-reform China, many well-known PR companies were cautious regarding whether or when they should enter the Chinese market. This made a group of courageous international public relations professionals see many foreign clients on the Chinese market in urgent need of public relations services.
- (4) Develop their own global business network. China is home to one-fourth of the world's population and ranks among the world's largest in terms of territory. In addition, after the reform and opening-up, China actively followed the footsteps of the world and tried to establish trade contacts with other countries and regions in the world, and initially established a worldwide sales network. Public relations companies with a considerable international influence saw China's increasing global influence. They entered China to expand their own business and improve their global business network.
- (5) Search for future Chinese customers. With the gradual expansion of China's economic scale, a number of excellent large and medium-sized enterprises would become potential customers of these multinational public relations companies.

## **1.5 The Beginning of Government Public Relations**

### ***1.5.1 Reform and Opening-Up and Government Public Relations***

Government public relations refers to the management science that government agencies coordinate public relations through mass communication in a specific social environment. Its purpose is to establish, maintain, and develop relations between the government and the public's coordination and ensure policy implementation. By completing the basic task of the government, public relations should develop the overall interests of the state, society and the public, establish justice, integrity, efficiency, practice, innovation, present a good image, and increase the government's reputation. In order to realize the above purposes, it is necessary to develop government public relations.

With the transformation of China's economic system and the deepening of the political system reform, government functions and management patterns were bound to change, which made the function of government public relations increasingly important. Under the new economic system, the government had to give full play to its public relations if it wanted to perform its functions successfully and

effectively. Government public relations opened a channel for the smooth implementation of government functions. This channel helped with coordinating the interests of all aspects of society, improving the relationship between the government and enterprises and various economic entities, striving for the public's understanding and support of government policies and reform measures, creating a good social relationship environment, and improving the management efficiency of the government.

### ***1.5.2 The Attempt of Chinese Government Public Relations***

As a kind of social activity phenomenon, Chinese government public relations had existed as early as in ancient society, but it was still in the bud at that time. After 1949, although the Chinese government seldom used the term “public relations”, it paid great attention to establishing a good image of itself by using various communication methods to win the understanding, support and cooperation of the public at home and abroad. Especially after the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, government public relations gradually arrived on the right track. Under the influence of the rapid development and marketization of the economy, democratization of politics, diversification of social interests and values, public relations of the Chinese government had realized historical changes one after another.

Government public relations activities in China generally began to rise in the late 1980s. On September 18, 1983, Changchun Li, then mayor of Shenyang, was the first to open China's first public telephone line for mayors. Later, Chongqing, Xi'an, Zhengzhou, Guangzhou, Taiyuan, Beijing, Shenzhen, Xiamen, Nanjing, Chengdu, Haikou and other cities followed suit.

### ***1.5.3 The Role of Government Public Relations***

Giving full play to the function of government public relations is the inner need for government to move toward democratization. Political democratization is the essential requirement of the socialist system and the basic feature of socialist society. The manifestation of political democratization is that the masses exercise the right to be masters of their own affairs through extensive participation in the political process. We can summarize the main content of political democratization into two aspects: attract the masses to participate in state management to the maximum extent, and make all government behavior such as management and decision-making in line with the will and requirements of the masses. The function of the government public relation creates conditions for the realization of these two aspects. Through “two-way communication”, government public relations can help the government get a more authentic, comprehensive understanding of the people's will, reflect the public's

voice, and obtain a broader public awareness and support. Public relations can also mobilize the enthusiasm and creativity of the masses and enhance their willingness to participate in political affairs.

Giving full play to the function of government public relations is an urgent need to maintain social stability. Stability is a prerequisite for development and reform. In the primary stage of socialism, it is of great significance to correctly balance reform and development with stability and maintain a stable political environment and social order. Without stability, nothing can be done. China was in a period of institutional transition, and various contradictions were prominent. However, the transformation of people's concepts still needed some time, so it was of great practical significance to maintain social stability. Maintaining stability could eliminate all kinds of misgivings and misunderstandings of the masses, ease or dissolve all sorts of contradictions and conflicts, so as to reduce or eliminate possible turbulence and form a stable and harmonious social and political situation. In order to do this, in addition to relying on the government right decision-making process and taking correct steps, government public relations also needed to promote and explain the intention of government decision-making and supporting measures, gain the understanding and support of the masses and eliminate the cause of misunderstanding and disturbing of the masses.

Giving full play to the function of government public relations was conducive to opening to the outside world. Opening to the outside world had been China's long-term basic state policy. Facing the trend of economic, scientific and technological globalization, China took a more active attitude towards the world and improved its all-directional, multi-tiered and wide-ranging opening-up pattern. Opening-up was not only economic opening-up but also political, cultural and informational opening. It was not only opening from country to country but also opening from region to region and sector to sector. In this all-directional, multi-tiered and wide-ranging pattern of opening-up, countries, regions and departments established and developed contacts and cooperation with the outside world. The first important thing was to know the other party and let the other party know China. In order to achieve mutual understanding and trust, it was necessary to exert the function of government public relations (Chen, 2003).

During this period, in order to meet the needs of socialist modernization, the Party and the government adopted a series of measures to strengthen further the relationship with the public, such as letters, visits, reports, rationalization suggestions, public opinion polls, etc., which produced good social effects. Government public relations should coordinate the overall relationship between the public in thought, action and interests, and develop the overall interests of the society for the government work. Taking economic construction as the center and paying attention to social benefits should be government public relations' starting point and final destination. Therefore, government public relations should serve for leaders to make decisions. The effective development of government public relations is inseparable from the strong support of the main leaders. In order to get strong support from government leaders, public relations departments must provide advice for government leaders. Public relations is scientific management based on information. The public relations department is the storage center of all kinds of data and the information collection and release center.

In the frequent communication with the public, it holds a large number of first-hand materials related to the public and the government and provides consultation and service conditions for leaders to make decisions. The Government Public Relations department is also the social environment monitoring center and the development trend forecasting center. It also has the task of guiding and educating the public.

At the same time, the only way to guarantee the correctness of government leadership decisions is to obtain the most comprehensive, substantial and reliable information. Only by making correct decisions can we win the support of the public and achieve the government's goals. According to the two-way symmetrical model of public relations, public relations is an organization transferring its information to the public and constantly adjusting public relations policies and methods by collecting information from the public feedback. From this point of view, public relations must keep pace with time. It could become a helpful tool by constantly adjusting to meet the needs of great social changes. Because of the continuous development of science and technology, social changes had occurred and finally promoted the continuous development of public relations.

## **1.6 Shenzhen University: The Attempt at Public Relations Education**

Due to the short time since public relations entered China, qualified public relations talents were in short supply. It was urgent to train more public relations practitioners to meet the needs of society through public relations education. To be specific, public relations education at this time had to educate tens of thousands of public relations managers and public relations ministers with modern science and technology and management knowledge and pioneering ability. Public relations education had to cultivate tens of thousands of educated, technical and professional public relations workers from all walks of life in industry, agriculture and commerce. Also, it had to cultivate tens of thousands of public relations educators and researchers who could meet the requirements of modern scientific and cultural development and new technological revolution.

### ***1.6.1 The Rise of Public Relations Education and Various Trainings***

Public relations education promotion by scholars in mainland China spontaneously began with the “Public Relations Knowledge” lecture. The public relations training course held by Shenzhen Federation of Trade Unions in January 1985 was the first public relations training course ever held in China, creating a precedent for public relations education in China. Since then, public relations lectures have been held in



other cities around the country. In April 1985, Beijing Normal University offered public relations lectures; In June 1985, the Graduate School of Peking University held a lecture on public relations. In the second half of 1985, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou Youth Economic Association and Guangzhou Finance and Trade Management Institute jointly held three public relations workshops. Later, colleges and universities, enterprises and social groups throughout the country had also opened various forms of public relations training courses in different regions and scopes. These training activities played a positive role in promoting the dissemination and popularization of public relations knowledge and cultivated a large number of public relations talents urgently needed by society at that time (Yu, 2006).

### ***1.6.2 The Development of Public Relations Professional Education***

In the middle and late 1980s, public relations education started in China. There were two main ways to introduce PR education in China from scratch. The first way was to establish it directly or introduce it independently by referring to the overseas public relations education model. For example, Shenzhen University, Sun Yat-sen University, Fudan University, Lanzhou University and other high schools adopted this practice, which was also the mainstream form of public relations education introduced in China. The second way included overseas scholars coming to Chinese universities to help set up public relations courses and promote public relations education. For example, Xiamen University and many foreign language universities set up public relations education with the help of foreign experts. Given the domestic environment and conditions at that time, few schools adopted this method of transplantation and introduction (Ji, 2009).

In September 1985, Shenzhen University was the first in China to establish a major in public relations. Shenzhen University, which was located in the largest special economic zone in China, shouldered the responsibility of the “experimental field” (Fang, 1990). With help from professor Niantong Lin from Hong Kong Baptist University, a team of young scholars including Mingyang Yu, Yangkang Ou, Lin Xiao, Hongjin Fang, Zhifang Yang, the integration of Jinan University, Fudan University, Beijing Film Academy, Beijing Broadcasting Institute (now Communication University of China), and other famous universities faculty in Hong Kong and Taiwan, Shenzhen University had opened public relations courses in line with renowned international universities, and simultaneously launched correspondence courses for public relations, with as many as 100,000 students. From then on, the public relations major entered the university. In 1990, Shenzhen University was awarded the “World’s Best Public Relations Golden Award” by the International Public Relations Association for its brilliant achievement of being the first to offer public relations professional education in mainland China, achieving a breakthrough in China’s public relations field. On behalf of Shenzhen University, Prof. Yuanwei Xiong went to Toronto,