Awards for best research papers in public relations: EUPRERA and Emerald honor academics and practitioners from Europe

Vienna, September 23 2022 – On the occasion of its annual congress, the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA), a body of academic institutions, researchers and senior professionals in the field of strategic communication with nearly 500 members from 48 countries, has awarded authors for their excellent research in strategic communication. Additionally, two special recognitions have been awarded by Emerald Group Publishing.

EUPRERA Best Paper Awards were given to the authors of three papers with the highest rankings in a two-stage, blind peer-review process performed by a scientific committee of renowned international scholars, headed by Chiara Valentini. The three winning papers:

"Navigating Moral Minefields in a VUCA-World: The Contribution of Moral Foundations Theory to Research on Issues Management, Risk and Crisis Communication" by **Timo Lenk**

This paper offers an excellent and original discussion of key factors affecting today risky and complex societies and how public relations professionals and organizations can navigate the VUCA-world. It does an excellent work in compiling and discussing important questions related to issues, risks, crises, public fragmentation, and complexity, and is highly centered on the conference annual theme. The paper is clearly and well written and provides provocative points of discussion for a deeper understanding of the conditions for targeted risk and crisis communication. It suggests original reflections on how moral foundation theory could inform research on issue, risk, and crisis management.

"Polarized Stakeholders and Crisis Communication" by **Michael Etter**

This is an overall well-written and well-thought conceptual paper shedding light on an important matter, such as stakeholder activism and polarization. The author has conducted an excellent multidisciplinary review of most recent research on a topical area to derive important conceptual and theoretical insights applicable to public relations problems. Moreover, the paper proposes a theoretical model explaining how stakeholders' judgment disagreements become triggered as organizations engage in controversial actions with both normative and professional values. The model is set to advance our understanding of stakeholder behaviors that impact organizational legitimacy, reputation, and status, and has a great potential to set future directions for public relations research in crisis communication and stakeholder communication.

"Prospects and Risks of Digitalization in Public Relations Research: Mapping Recurrent Narratives of a Debate in Fragmentation (2010-2021)" by **Jannik Kretschmer** and **Peter Winkler**

This is a highly stimulating and thoughtful paper, that tries to make sense of contemporary debates on digitalization in public relations research. It is clearly written and presents an updated review of how digitalization has been addressed in public relations literature, highlighting unsolved issues, and knowledge gaps. Overall, the paper suggests an innovative integrative perspective on digitalization that can be of great "use" to researchers interested in understanding opportunities and risks of digitalization for societies.

Moreover, Emerald Group Publishing, publisher of *Journal of Communication Management*, delivered the yearly **Emerald Professional Impact Award** for the best research-based paper that is not only academically sound, but which makes an important and useful contribution to the practice of communication management. The paper addresses issues of current concern to managers and also successfully discusses the research's implications to managers and for practice. The winning paper is:

"Knowing Thy Enemy and Fighting the Good Fight: A Framework for Organizational Preparation for and Response to AI-driven Disinformation Campaigns" by **Elise Maria Karinshak** and **Yan Jin**

This is an excellent theory-driven paper with potential impact on practice in a field in need of more strategic communication research. Disinformation is harming both democracy and organizations in ways that we could not foresee some decades ago, when the digital transformation was mainly viewed as something with positive consequences. In this paper the authors synthesize theoretical and technical literature characterizing the effects of AI on disinformation. They then propose a conceptual framework for disinformation response in the corporate sector. The study concludes that future disinformation response efforts will not be able to rely on detection strategies, due to the evolution of AI- created content quality but need to rely on content influence.

And from this year on, the EUPRERA book series *Advances in Public Relations and Communication Management*, a collection of the best contributions from our congresses, competes for the **Emerald Literati Award for Outstanding Author Contribution**. This year the award was recognized to:

Vibeke Thøis Madsen for her chapter "Communicative Leadership on Internal Social Media: a Way to Employee Engagement?", published in the volume *Joy. Using Strategic Communication to Improve Well-being and Organizational Success*.

Vibeke Thøis Madsen explores interactions on internal social media (ISM) in a Danish bank to understand how communicative leadership is enacted in social media dialogues within an organizational context. She identified three communicative leadership styles: formal communicative leadership, co-constructed communicative leadership, and peer communicative leadership. The findings suggest that communicative leadership is co-constructed in interactions between managers and employees as well as in interactions among employees. We learn that communicative leadership on ISM is not only enacted by formal managers; it is enacted just as much by knowledgeable individual organizational members and it is also co-constructed by groups of employees. In this respect, the findings help us understand leadership as a complex set of interactions in organizational contexts and know that empowering communication on ISM can therefore enhance employee engagement.

Special recognition to the best reviewer

EUPRERA Best Reviewer Award recognizes the work done by the reviewer because it is an essential contribution to the quality and the success of the annual congress. This year's winner is:

Maria Isaksson from BI Norwegian Business School, Norway, who has contributed to careful, thorough and useful reviews.

The quality of review of Dr. Isaksson is of excellent level. She provided lengthy and detailed comments, as well as practical suggestions to help authors further develop their papers. Her comments are constructive and encouraging and spur authors to reflect on own arguments and research choices. Attentive feedbacks and high consideration for different academic cultural traditions and perspectives are also visible in the offered comments.

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