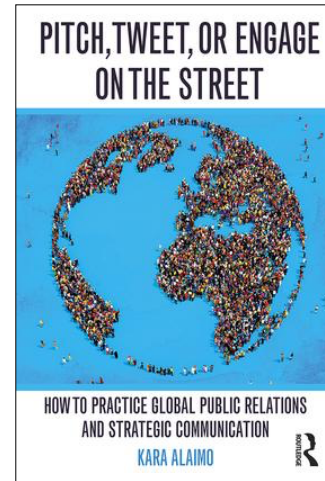


Kara Alaimo, **Pitch, Tweet, or Engage on the Street: How to Practice Global Public Relations and Strategic Communication**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2016, 496 pp., \$62.95 (paperback).

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Pitch, Tweet, or Engage on the Street: How to Practice Global Public Relations and Strategic Communication by Kara Alaimo takes readers on a journey through public relations practice around the world. Employing a conversational tone, the author directly addresses her readers and—from a North American vantage point—provides guidance for public relations professionals who seek to implement communication strategies and tactics for different cultures. Alaimo notes that she primarily wrote the book with her own students in mind. And, indeed, the content goes beyond what one would expect from an applied guide. It is grounded in academic theory, informed by qualitative primary research, and supported with a plethora of instructive and interesting case studies and examples, many from the author’s own professional public relations experience communicating for the United Nations and the U.S. Treasury Department, among others. This makes it a valuable resource for practitioners, teachers, and students of public relations and strategic communication.



The book first sorts through scholarship on global and international public relations and reinforces common definitions of international public relations as a practice that involves communication and relationship building with stakeholders “across national borders” (p. 1). The author further lays out differing approaches to global/international public relations practice along with advantages and disadvantages of global versus local strategies. Criticizing a heavy reliance on Western public relations principles in public relations practice across national and cultural boundaries, this chapter situates the book within a functionalist perspective informed by generic/specific theory (see Verčič, Grunig, & Grunig, 1996). More specifically, it proposes a

modified generic/specific approach [...] that begins with an awareness of the full range of public relations strategies practiced around the world and then selects from the best among them in order to craft global approaches to be adapted locally. (p. 20)

Based on qualitative interviews and focus groups with public relations professionals, the author further extends generic/specific theory by adding one generic principle, which holds that public relations measures “should be tailored to be culturally appropriate” (p.14), and two specific dimensions to consider when practicing in different local contexts (influencers and social expectations toward organizations).

The following chapter then adopts Hofstede’s cultural dimensions as a base to identify differences across cultures relevant for public relations practice, among others. It thus follows the examples of a wide

range of studies on global public relations (see Ki & Ye, 2014; Sriramesh, Kim, & Takasaki, 1999; Taylor, 2000) and aligns with a managerial orientation toward effective public relations in different cultural contexts.

Commonly applied, this approach has also been the subject of criticism (see Courtright, Wolfe, & Baldwin, 2011; Rittenhofer & Valentini, 2015). Rittenhofer and Valentini (2015), for instance, have argued that it creates a blind spot for transnational and cross-border publics, which transcend spatial boundaries. The book itself outlines some key limitations; particularly the risks of stereotyping and neglecting differences within cultures. While advising caution, Alaimo ultimately emphasizes the continued usefulness of cultural dimensions as orientation for practitioners who need to identify best practice solutions in line with different cultural norms and expectations at the tactical level, such as event planning or pitching stories to the media.

Having set up theoretical grounding, the book proceeds with several stand-alone chapters that provide hands-on advice for different aspects of global public relations practice. Throughout, the author shares and draws on insights from public relations professionals gathered through qualitative research. The chapters contain brief case studies and/or extended examples of campaigns and specific public relations tactics. In addition, they provide useful tools for practice such as a checklist with questions for local audits and an extensive list of major public relations agencies around the world.

Chapter 3 emphasizes the importance of working with local public relations experts and discusses pragmatic considerations and challenges when hiring a global or local agency, freelancers, or full-time staff members in a new market. Following, it introduces strategies and best practices for establishing an inclusive and productive work environment that bridges cultural differences. Finally, it gives a rundown of typical elements of public relations planning and evaluation.

Chapters 4 through 6 focus on aspects of global public relations practice in different organizational contexts. They provide brief overviews of research, listening, and strategic planning for corporations, governments, and issues-oriented NGOs along with guidance on selected aspects of implementation. Readers learn about brand positioning in different markets, maintaining strong corporate social responsibility, framing, crafting organizational identities and messages for global issues campaigns, building advocacy networks, holding powerful actors accountable, and tactics of public diplomacy, among other things.

Chapter 7 discusses effective strategies for media relations with global and local media and for using social media channels. In line with previous chapters, it contains pragmatic advice on adapting press releases to different national contexts, pitching stories, and delivering social media messages, along with examples. Additionally, it surveys selected key international newspapers, news networks, and social media platforms.

The final five chapters discuss challenges and best practices in ten cultural clusters (Nordic, Anglo, Germanic, Latin and Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan and North Africa, Middle East, Confucian, Southern Asian, Latin America) that were first established by *The Globe Study of 62 Societies* (House, Hanges, Javidan, & Dorfman, 2004). Sorting European countries into five of the ten clusters, this model takes a more

differentiated view toward Europe than other regions of the world. The book, however, fairly evenly devotes space to each continent.

Each cluster is described in terms of its distinct cultural dimensions, and the author zooms in on selected countries, such as China, Germany, Argentina, Russia, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Ghana, and Kenya. The country spotlights open with a central piece of advice or caution for practicing public relations. For instance, practitioners should be prepared to focus on family in Italy, respect strict privacy norms and regulations in Germany, never offer exclusives to reporters in South Korea, expect that journalists request money in Russia, emphasize interpersonal communication in Palestine, be aware of local politics' impact on their organizations in Argentina, and adopt strategies to the country's diverse communities in Kenya. The overviews then proceed to discuss political and economic aspects as well as media systems and their particularities in relation to public relations practice. Making no claim to providing exhaustive surveys of each country's practices and structures, they engage a variety of political and media systems within each cultural cluster and open a treasure trove of insights and best practices.

At the same time, the journey around the world of public relations may also leave readers with some open dilemmas. How should a practitioner/organization deal with requests for money when solicited by a journalist within a specific country? What kinds of collaborations with social influencers in China could put my organization's counterpart at risk of repercussions? How might a country's policies of censorship conflict with ethical obligations to disclose critical information to stakeholders?

As *Pitch, Tweet, or Engage on the Street* calls on practitioners to broaden their horizons about public relations tactics and strategies practiced around the world, it provides an excellent starting point for professionals. For the global public relations classroom, it offers an engaging and conversational text with interesting current examples that will hold readers' attention and provide rich material for further class discussions. Selecting the book, instructors should be aware that it approaches global public relations from a functionalist, managerial perspective and places heavy emphasis on best practices at the tactical level. Overall, it is an insightful and valuable asset as either an introductory textbook, particularly in a practice-oriented class, or as a supplementary resource.

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