

## HOW IS THE THAI RED CROSS SOCIETY PERCEIVED IN THE SIGHT OF EMPLOYEES

การรับรู้ของพนักงานต่อสภากาชาดไทย

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### Abstract

Whatever people perceive can directly and indirectly cause a corporate image problem. The Thai Red Cross Society a national, nonprofit organisation, needs to know how the publics, especially employees perceive the organisation so that an effective communication campaign can be developed. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to study how employees perceived the Thai Red Cross Society systematically. The in-depth interviews were conducted with those who were from public organisations, private companies, state enterprises, and nongovernmental organisations. The findings revealed three sections of perception, i.e. the perception towards the Thai Red Cross Society, the Principles of Red Cross, and the Thai Red Cross Society's organisations. In general, it was happy to say that the sampled employees had shared, correct perception toward the Thai Red Cross Society. That is to say, the Thai Red Cross Society is a national, nonprofit, neutral, independent, and governmental-support organization where targets to giving assistance to society. In contrast, limited perception and misperception towards the Thai Red Cross Society were, somewhat, discovered as follows. Thus, correct information via appropriate platforms shall be disseminated so that correct experiences can be created and confusion and rumours can also be avoided.

**Keywords:** public relations, perception, the Thai Red Cross Society

## บทคัดย่อ

การรับรู้ของบุคคลสามารถก่อปัญหาให้เกิดขึ้นกับภาพลักษณ์ขององค์กรได้ทั้งทางตรงและทางอ้อม สภาอากาศไทยถือเป็นองค์กรสาธารณกุศลระดับชาติ ซึ่งการรับรู้ของประชาชน โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งพนักงานมีประโยชน์ต่อการพัฒนาโครงการรณรงค์เพื่อการสื่อสารให้มีประสิทธิภาพ ดังนั้นวัตถุประสงค์ของงานวิจัยนี้คือ เพื่อศึกษาการรับรู้ของพนักงานต่อสภาอากาศไทย การวิจัยนี้ใช้การสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกกับพนักงานของ 4 หน่วยงานใหญ่ ได้แก่ หน่วยงานราชการ หน่วยงานเอกชน หน่วยงานรัฐวิสาหกิจ และหน่วยงานนอกภาครัฐ ผลการวิจัยพบการรับรู้ 3 ส่วน ได้แก่ การรับรู้ต่อสภาอากาศไทย การรับรู้ต่อหลักกาชาด 7 ประการ และการรับรู้ต่อหน่วยงานของสภาอากาศไทย เป็นที่น่ายินดีที่พนักงานจากทั้ง 4 หน่วยงานมีการรับรู้ต่อสภาอากาศไทย การรับรู้ต่อหลักกาชาด 7 ประการ และการรับรู้ต่อหน่วยงานของสภาอากาศไทยได้อย่างถูกต้อง อย่างไรก็ตามพนักงานยังมีการรับรู้ที่จำกัด และผิดไปบ้าง ดังนั้น จึงจำเป็นอย่างยิ่งที่สภาอากาศไทยจะต้องสื่อสารข้อมูลที่ถูกต้อง โดยเลือกใช้ช่องทางการสื่อสารที่เหมาะสมกับกลุ่มเป้าหมาย เพื่อสร้างประสบการณ์ที่ถูกต้อง และเพื่อหลีกเลี่ยงความสับสน และข่าวลือที่จะเกิดขึ้นเช่นเดียวกัน

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## Introduction

Whatever people perceive can directly and indirectly cause a corporate image problem. Certainly, a perceived corporate image plays vital roles of good or bad behaviour indication and value-added (Wongmontha, 2003; Pookasawat, 2013: 37). An image building is shaped by an individual's hearing, seeing, knowledge, social system, touching, impression, tasting, attitude, smelling, and understanding and such elements are mutually affected by external environments and situations (Kesaprakorn, 2011: 9).

Although some previous studies showed different perceptions towards, in particular, the Thai Red Cross Society, a highly-respected, nonprofit organisation where gives humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality, or, in short, the seven Principles of Red Cross (The Thai Red Cross Society, 2013b), which little is known. For example, the recent research, namely, 'Giving supports to the Thai Red Cross Society',

revealed that altruism is always attached to Thai people's perception towards the organisation. That is to say, most people provide their supports on blood donation (78 percent), money donation (7 percent), body donation (5 percent), organ donation (4 percent), eye donation (3 percent), volunteering (2 percent), and other supports (1 per-cent) (The Thai Red Cross Society, 2014). In addition, Phetwong (2014), a professional from the Thai Red Cross Society commented that:

Most people have perceived that the Thai Red Cross Society is a part of Chulalongkorn Hospital. Conversely, in fact, the Hospital is under the umbrella of the Thai Red Cross Society. The next problem is that some people use her emblem wrongly misleading the people about justice of the Thai Red Cross Society.

Also, statements shown above are not studied systematically. Further examination and investigation are, therefore, called for.

The scope of this study is to compare perception of employees in Bangkok toward the Thai Red Cross Society. This is because they occupy the largest market share (Summary of people's working states, 2014). The specific samples of this study were those who were government officials and worked in governmental-based organisations, without concerning benefits; private company employees and worked in organisations mainly focusing on earning benefits; state enterprise officials and worked in organisations owned by the government (holding more than 50 per cent shares), but focusing on earning benefits; and non-profit organisations' officers and worked in benevolent organisations and foundations.

## Literature Review

By analysis, perception is framed by internal and external factors. The five senses and interpretation (Cherry, 2015; Pattanaittikul, 2002; Satawedin, 2003) and acceptance and response to what being seen (Cherry, 2015.) are the internal factors. Individuals are also influenced by external factors like experiences and environments (Cheoichanya, Wiwatnanukul & Anawatsiriwong, 1995; Cherry, 2015; Satawedin, 2003). Satawedin (2003: 76) further explained that, when individuals have experienced something in environments, they have different perceptions. After that, meanings and attitudes are created. These later affect on individuals' behaviour.

The process is not time-consuming, according to Cherry (2015). This scholar also proposed more details on perception-building that, apart from the environmental stimulus, the so-called attended stimulus-familiar or stage people's facial expression and the tendency to perceive innovation and the image on the retina also play the vital roles of creating perception. It is then time to the neutral process. However, individuals do not interpret everything, selective perception towards what they think and are interested in is behaved, though. It is not odd if the retortion and different interpretation happen because different people have different attention and experience (Cheoichanya, Wiwatnanukul & Anawatsiriwong, 1995).

Especially during a crisis, building correct, good perception towards corporates can lead and rehabilitate their good image. Ferguson, Wallace & Chandler (2012) conducting a study, 'Rehabilitating Your Organization's Image: Public Relations Professionals' Perceptions of the Effectiveness and Ethicality of Image Repair Strategies in Crisis Situations' found that in order to manage a crisis, public relations strategy is employed because it can build perception by providing internal and external people information and publicity for the ultimate purpose of maintaining good image.

In summary, perception is an interpretation process affected by various factors including environment, people, experience, and motivations. Nevertheless perception is selected following to their own attention and interest.

## Research Methodology

The qualitative study employed in-depth interviews. They were conducted with three government officers, three private company employees, three state enterprise employees, and three employees in non-governmental organisations. The following were the details of the interviewees:

**Table 1** Gender and age of the interviewees

Occupation	Initial	Gender	Age
Government officers	K.	Male	24
	B.	Female	25
	P.	Female	37
Private company employee	P.	Female	54
	N.1	Female	34
	N.2	Female	25
State enterprise employees	T.1	Female	40
	T.2	Female	30
	E.	Male	24
Employees in nongovernmental organisations	K.	Male	27
	C.	Male	34
	P.	Male	30

It was important to note at this point that, in respect to the interviewees' privacy and reputation protection, the initials would be represented. Although generalisability could be questioned, more attention was paid to triangulation and the success in giving the answers. The main goal of this research, also, was to give the contribution to the Thai Red

Cross Society so that an effective communication campaign could be developed and improved, according to the conversation between Phetwong (2014), a professional from the Thai Red Cross Society and the researchers.

## Research Findings

The researchers shall divide the research findings into three parts including the perception towards the Thai Red Cross Society, that towards the Principles of Red Cross, and that towards the Thai Red Cross Society's organisations.

### *Perception towards the Thai Red Cross Society*

The Thai Red Cross Society is a national, nonprofit organisation where the people can depend. Its operation and implementation are based upon the Principles of Red Cross (more details were provided in the next section). According to the Thai Red Cross Society Act (Issue 5) 2007, the Thai Red Cross Society is 'a juristic person who gives publics help and works on the Principles of Red Cross. It should be supported by the government.' She is also committed to 1) the giving of medical and health services, 2) the giving of physical and mental relief, 3) the provision of blood services, and 4) the improvement of quality of life (The Thai Red Cross Society, 2015).

In any walk of life, all the interviewees perceived the Thai Red Cross Society as a nonprofit organisation which aimed to help society and give social contributions. It was not different from the vision of the Thai Red Cross Society defined.

However, there were only three participants, i.e. N.1, private company employee, female, 34, N.2, private company employee, female, 25, T.1, state enterprise employee, female, 40, and T.2, state enterprise employee, female, 30 talking about the role of the government. In details, while the first three ladies from private companies and state enterprises correctly perceived the Thai Red Cross society as the organisation the government should give the support, '[the Thai Red Cross society] is controlled by the government, mirrored by the last woman coming from the state enterprise sector. The following statement showed an example of correct perception:

I think the government should give [the Thai Red Cross Society] support because [I] have ever heard that the Thai Red Cross Society uses the same operation and implementation as other Red Cross Societies. Because the Thai Red Cross Society has to give its hands throughout the country, support from the government is necessary.

(N.1, private company employee, female, 34)

Yes, I think she should be [non-governmental organisation]. There should not be a governmental organisation. However, the government should give [the Thai Red Cross society] supports.

(T.1, state enterprise employee, female, 40)

In consideration of the mission of the Thai Red Cross Society the interviewees viewed, more interestingly, there were only three issues, i.e. 1) the giving of medical and health services, 2) the giving of physical and mental relief, and 4) the improvement of quality of life the interviewees projected. The government officers, i.e., B., government officer, female, 25 and P., government officer, female, 37, and K., nongovernmental employee, male, 27 agreed on the two roles of the Thai Red Cross Society. On the contrary, 1) the giving of medical and health services was of the high interest of T.1, state enterprise employee, female, 40. For 4) the improvement of quality of life, there was only B., government officer, female, 25, projecting.

### *Perception towards the Principles of Red Cross*

There are the seven fundamental Principles of Red Cross as follows: 1) humanity, 2) impartiality, 3) neutrality, 4) independent, 5) voluntary service, 6) unity, and 7) universality (The Thai Red Cross Society, 2013b).

The principles of 1) humanity, in particular, 2) impartiality, 3) neutrality, 4) independent, and 5) voluntary service were of high perception. For example,

... [The Thai Red Cross Society] gives assistance to society including ailment, physical checks, helping those who are in danger, both physical and mental health, taking care of those who are poor and suffer from disasters.

(K., government official, male, 24)

... [The Thai Red Cross Society] is an independent and neutral organisation giving social contributions and helps to all the people, with no discrimination.

(B., government official, female, 25)

... [The Thai Red Cross Society] is an independent organisation giving assistance and relief to those who suffers from disasters. She is also a nonprofit organisation.

(P., government official, female, 37)

... [The Thai Red Cross Society] is an independent and neutral organisation. When there is a war, a Red Cross flag will be placed at the site declaring that [the Thai Red Cross] gives assistance to

all parties, with no discrimination. She is a voluntary and nonprofit organisation.

(T.1., state enterprise employee, female, 40)

... [The Thai Red Cross Society] is a nonprofit and voluntary organisation. She aims to giving people health and human rights. It is neutral.

(P., nongovernmental organisation, male, 30)

### *Perception towards the Thai Red Cross Society's Organisations*

To be more obvious, how the interviewees perceived the Thai Red Cross Society's organisations was presented in Table 2.

**Table 2** The perception of the interviewees towards the Thai Red Cross Society's organisations

Organisation	Government			Private company			State Enterprise			Nongovernmental		
	K.	B.	P.	P.	N.1	N.2	T.1	T.2	E.	K.	C.	P.
Administration Office												
Personnel Bureau												
Red Cross College of Nursing	4		8	3	5	4	4			5		7
Red Cross Youth Bureau			7									
King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital	2	4	2	2		5	8	1	2	4		2
Relief and Community Health Bureau	5									7		3
Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute		2	5	4		6	5			6	4	

**Table 2** The perception of the interviewees towards the Thai Red Cross Society's organisations (cont.)

Organisation	Government			Private company			State Enterprise			Nongovernmental		
Thai Red Cross Eye Bank		5	3	5	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	4
The Thai Red Cross AIDS Research Center												
Internal Audit Bureau												
First Aid and Home Health Care Training Center												
Finance Bureau												
Fund Raising Bureau												
Central Bureau												
Red Cross Volunteer Bureau	6		6	7	4		7	5	5		3	6
Queen Savang Vadhana Memorial Hospital												
National Blood Center	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Thai Red Cross Rehabilitation Center												
Organ Donation Center	3	6	4	6	3	3	3	4	4	3		5
Nutrition Development Chitralada Palace												
Information Technology Center												
Thai Red Cross Children's Home		3		8			6	6				
Thai Red Cross E-Museum												
Rh-negative Club												
Rajakarun, Thai Red Cross Center, Khaolan												

Information source of the Thai Red Cross Society's organisations: Thai Red Cross Society (2013a)



Table 2 showed that all of the interviewees perceived the Thai Red Cross Society as composed of the National Blood Center most. It was followed by the Thai Red Cross Eye Bank, Organ Donation Center, King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, Red Cross Volunteer Bureau, Red Cross College of Nursing, Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute, Thai Red Cross Children's Home, Relief and Community Health Bureau, Red Cross Youth Bureau. For the rest of the organisations, nonetheless, there was no evidence displaying the interviewees' recognition.

As stated above, although the National Blood Center got high popularity, there was an exception of T2, (state enterprise employee, female, 30,) who gave her priority to the King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, instead.

Perceived confusion and reluctance was noticed when the interviewees were talking about the Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, Thai Red Cross Eye Bank, Organ Donation Center, and Red Cross College of Nursing.

In regards to the Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, the interviewees, especially the government officials and state enterprise employees perceived that the Hospital was an independent organisation or an organisation under Chulalongkorn University. Follows were the statements quoted:

... Is the Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital an organisation under the Thai Red Cross Society?

(K., government official, male, 24)

... [I] perceive the Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital as an organisation of Chulalongkorn University.

(P., government official, female, 37)

... Is the Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital an organisation of the Thai Red Cross Society? I think the Hospital is closed to the Thai Red Cross Society. But, I do not know whether the former is under the latter.

(T.,1, state enterprise employee, female, 40)

The interviewee whose occupation was a private company employee, i.e., N.2, (female, 25) was also curious whether or not the Red Cross College of Nursing is an organisation of the Thai Red Cross Society.

B., (government official, female, 25) always perceived that the Thai Red Cross Eye Bank and Organ Donation Center were, likewise, under the Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital.

The main reasons of such perception and remembrance were personal experiences and various channels of communication.

## Discussion/Conclusion

Undoubtedly, corporate image is directly and indirectly framed by an individual's perception. In general, the sampled employees had shared, correct perception toward the Thai Red Cross Society. That is to say, the Thai Red Cross Society is a national, nonprofit, neutral, independent, and governmental-support



organisation which targets to give assistance to society.

In contrast, limited perception and misperception towards the Thai Red Cross Society were, somewhat, discovered as follows.

First, the government controlled the Thai Red Cross Society.

The mission regarding the provision of blood services was not perceived, when asking the interviewees about the organisation in an overall picture, moreover although the first top-of-mind, perceived that organisation under the umbrella of the Thai Red Cross Society was the National Blood Centre. This research finding was not different from the report of the Thai Red Cross Society (2014) which revealed blood donation is the most favourable activity that people give to the Thai Red Cross Society.

It could be far from an individual's daily life, thus, the Principles of Red Cross, especially 6) unity and 7) universality were not perceived among the sampled employees.

Especially when thinking of the Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, Thai Red Cross Eye Bank, Organ Donation Center, and Red Cross College of Nursing, last but not least, uncertainty and hesitance happened. In details, the perception

towards the Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital is an independent organisation, not an organisation under the umbrella of the Thai Red Cross Society. Also, one perceived the hospital as an organisation of Chulalongkorn University. One had no idea that the Red Cross College of Nursing is an organisation of the Thai Red Cross Society. More interestingly, one stated that the Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital is composed of the Thai Red Cross Eye Bank and Organ Donation Center.

All the limited perception and misperception could cause a challenge with the Thai Red Cross Society's image. Thus, correct information via appropriate platforms shall be disseminated so that correct experiences can be created and confusion and rumours can also be avoided.

It is suggested that future studies should contribute to study perception of internal employees of the organisations under the Thai Red Cross Society. This is because there are the odds to mention that wrong and misperception towards the organisation presented in this study can be reasoned by the perceived understanding of the internal Thai Red Cross Society employees.

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