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Abstract

Expectations intersect with many areas of public relations, yet conceptual and theoretical understandings of expectations have not been strong in public relations research. In fact, expectations are often discussed at a cursory level, expectation theories are seldom applied, and the concept of expectations is not problematized. In this article, therefore, we explore the role of expectations in public relations and illustrate how expectations shape organizational relationships, particularly by enabling or destroying the creation of organizational intangible assets. We identify gaps in how expectations are addressed in public relations, present the results from a literature review of 159 academic articles, and move forward conceptually by elaborating expectations as normative, predictive, and destructive assessments. The predictive and destructive dimensions that recognize negative expectations, in particular, can help public relations scholars understand the flipside of the much more often discussed positive expectations. Fulfillment of negative expectations, for example, can explain the active maintenance of unfavorable reputations and reputational stigmas.

Keywords: Expectations, expectation theory, intangible assets, literature review

Introduction

Public relations theory emphasizes organizational relationships, and expectations are widely acknowledged as one factor that affects organizations' relationships with their publics. Previous studies have connected expectations to the central practices of public relations, including issues management (e.g., Jaques, 2009; Reichart, 2003), relationship management (e.g., Coombs, 2000; Ledingham, 2003), reputation management (e.g., Eisenegger, 2009; Fombrun and Rindova, 1998), and crisis management (e.g., Brønn, 2012; Coombs, 2000; see Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2014 for a review). In general, public relations scholars agree that unmet stakeholder, customer, and employee expectations can hurt relationships and reputations (e.g., Brønn, 2012; Coombs, 2000; Eisenegger, 2009; Le and Bartlett, 2014; Reichart, 2003). Understanding expectations is proving to be timely for organizations especially in the digital realm, where preferences, experiences, and opinions are voiced visibly and sometimes forcefully (e.g., Madsen et al., 2018).

This article explores the role of expectations and expectation theory in public relations, and takes steps toward a more robust theorization of expectations within public relations scholarship. First, to set the conceptual background for expectations, we build on previous literature to present how expectations have been addressed in public relations research and connected to central concepts and focus areas, particularly in relation to creating and maintaining intangible assets. Second, we report the findings of a literature review, which focused on seven theories related to expectations to determine how these theories have been applied in public relations. The selected theories stem from social psychology and customer satisfaction research, and they are related to relationship formation (social exchange theory and expectancy-value theory), relationship maintenance (symbolic interaction theory and expectation states theory) and relationship evaluation (expectancy disconfirmation theory, the gap model, and expectancy violations theory). Third, we offer a conceptual elaboration of

expectations as normative, predictive, and destructive assessments, which each unveils a dimension that explains how expectations affect relationship formation, maintenance, and evaluation.

Expectations and public relations: Outlining connections

Public relations scholars have often advised organizations to identify and monitor expectations to keep up with changes in their environments (e.g., Brummette and Zoch, 2016; Heath and Bowen, 2002; Kim and Ferguson, 2018; Le and Bartlett, 2014; Ledingham, 2003). Neglected, mismatched, and misinterpreted expectations are typical reasons for emerging issues that demand organizations' attention (Jaques, 2009; Reichart, 2003) and the causes of (reputational) crises that can threaten organizations (Brønn, 2012; Coombs, 2000; Ledingham, 2003). In a broad perspective, meeting expectations is seen as a sound foundation for building trust, legitimacy, and favorable reputations among publics (e.g., Eisenegger 2009; Schmeltz, 2017).

Recent research has suggested that the value of expectations lies in their ability to build or destroy organizations' intangible assets (Canel and Luoma-aho, 2019), and specific areas such as trust building are reported to constitute some of the most important tasks for public relations practitioners (Zerfass et al. 2019). In fact, expectations have widely been connected to intangible assets and the concept of expectations has frequently appeared in research related to reputation, responsibility, relationships, legitimacy, satisfaction, trust, and identity (Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2015). Table 1 summarizes these connections.

TABLE 1. Connections between expectations and central concepts of public relations research (adapted from Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2015; Olkkonen, 2015)

Concept	**Examples of how expectations are connected to the concept**	**Examples of referring articles**
Reputation	Reputation as an ability to meet expectations Reputation as a source of future expectations Strengthening of reputation from meeting expectations	Coombs (2007) Mahon and Wartick (2003) Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004)
Responsibility	Corporate social responsibility as meeting stakeholder and societal expectations Corporate social responsibility as anticipating societal expectations	Golob, Jancic, and Lah (2009) Podnar and Golob (2007) Westhues and Einwiller (2006)
Relationships	Expectations as a basis for relationship formation Continuation of relationships dependent on met expectations Unmet expectations as a threat to continuing relationships	Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) Ledingham (2003) Vidaver-Cohen (2007)
Legitimacy	Legitimacy as congruence between organizational activities and societal expectations Loss of legitimacy as actions contrary to expectations Pursuit of legitimacy through acting according to societal expectations	Barnett (2007) Johansen and Nielsen (2012)
Satisfaction	Dependence of satisfaction and dissatisfaction on meeting or not meeting expectations	Ledingham, Bruning, and Wilson (1999) Brønn (2012)
Trust	Occurrence of trust when expectations are met Trust as willingness to rely on another based on positive expectations	Adams, Highhouse, and Zickar (2010) Kramer (2010) Poppo and Shepker (2010)
Identity	Alignment of internal and external expectations with organizational identity	Illia, Schmid, Fischbach, Hangartner, and Rivola (2004) Piechocki (2004)

As Table 1 shows, expectations are used in the public relations literature to explain some of the most central concepts in the field. Reputation is often defined as the ability or capacity to fulfill or exceed the expectations imposed by publics or assessment of how well an organization meets expectations (e.g., Coombs 2007; de Quevedo-Puente et al. 2007; Westhues and Einwiller, 2006). Responsibility and legitimacy can both be explained as conformity or congruence with societal expectations or ability to anticipate societal expectations (e.g., Barnett, 2007; Golob et al., 2009; Johansen and Nielsen, 2012; Westhues and Einwiller, 2006). Expectations are further mentioned as factors that initiate relationships (Broom et al., 1997) and influence them once active (Bruning and Galloway, 2003;

Ledingham 2003), especially in terms of satisfaction (Ledingham et al., 1999). Expectations are also seen as a reason why relationships end, particularly because dissatisfaction can result from unfulfilled expectations (e.g., Jo, 2006; Ledingham et al., 1999). Regarding trust, positive expectations are considered to be tokens of trusting attitudes (e.g., Kramer ,2010) and willingness to rely on others (e.g., Poppo and Shepker, 2010). Finally, mismatches between expectations and organizational conduct are seen as future threats to identity (e.g., Illia et al., 2004).

These examples demonstrate the wide use of expectations in the public relations literature. Furthermore, the connections to issues management, relationship management, reputation management, and crisis management (Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2014), hint at which areas of public relations might be understood better by clarifying expectations theoretically and conceptually. Expectations are both an underlying current and an intersecting phenomenon in public relations because they explain central areas and concepts, and the interlinks between two or more concepts. For example, expectations of responsibility can be connected to how reputations are assessed (e.g., Berens and van Riel, 2004; Ponzi et al., 2011). Similarly, meeting responsibility expectations can be seen as a source of legitimacy (e.g., Johansen and Nielsen, 2012; Le and Bartlett, 2014).

To summarize the connections between expectations and public relations, we conclude that the concept of expectations appears frequently in public relations research, and it is relevant to scholars across wide areas of the field. However, expectations are primarily used to explain other concepts and are seldom problematized conceptually (Olkkonen, 2015), which raises a question whether public relations scholars are addressing expectations with sufficient theoretical and conceptual precision. In the next section, we analyze public relations literature further to explore the extent to which expectation theories are utilized and whether public relations scholars use them to study expectations.

Expectation theory and public relations: A literature review

As expectations intersect with some of the most central concepts in public relations research, we executed a literature review to determine how public relations scholars apply expectation theories. In particular, we studied the use of seven theories that recognize the role of expectations in relationships: social exchange theory, expectancy-value theory, symbolic interaction theory, expectation states theory, expectancy disconfirmation theory, the gap model, and expectancy violations theory. These seven theories are well-known especially in social psychology, the field in which they originated. What makes them interesting for the intersection of expectations and public relations is that they explain the relevance of expectations in relationships (see also Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, *forthcoming*). We grouped the seven theories into relationship formation theories, relationship maintenance theories, and relationship evaluation theories, based on the phase of relationships to which they relate most strongly. Although this categorization likely is somewhat artificial, especially because relationship evaluation can overlap with relationship formation and maintenance, each category highlights a certain aspect, whether it is the initial stage (formation), interaction during relationships (maintenance), or relationship outcomes (evaluation). Furthermore, our selection of theories is not meant to be comprehensive but it is extensive in the sense that these theories approach relationships and their dynamics from different angles.

First, *social exchange theory* and *expectancy-value theory* are related to the role of expectations in the relationship formation process (relationship formation theories):

1. Social exchange theory explains how relational partners choose to engage with others by assessing and weighing the expected costs and the possible rewards (Blau 1964; Cook and Rice, 2013, Homans, 1961). During relationship formation, this assessment of initial expectations can be crucial because the

relationship might not start at all if the expected interaction costs are too high compared to the potential benefits and rewards.

2. Expectancy-value theory (Atkinson, 1957; Wigfield and Eccles, 2000) explains decisions to engage with others as an assessment process between what is considered to be valuable and whether the outcomes are likely to be achieved. Expectancy-value theory is often connected to motivation to succeed and motivation to avoid failure (Wigfield et al., 2009).

Second, *symbolic interaction theory* and *expectation states theory* describe expectations during the interactions within a relationship (relationship maintenance theories):

3. Symbolic interaction theory focuses on the meanings, roles, and cues developed during interactions (Blumer, 1969). For example, certain positions create expectations for behavior, and in any situation, people label also themselves, setting expectations for their own behavior (Stryker and Vryan, 2006).
4. Expectation states theory addresses the evaluations and assessments that influence interactions, and how status hierarchies stemming from differences in prestige and power can explain them (Berger and Zelditch, 1998; Correll and Ridgeway, 2006).

Third, *expectancy disconfirmation theory*, *the gap model*, and *expectancy violations theory* connect expectations to the outcomes of relationships that are relevant especially from the perspective of relationship evaluation (relationship evaluation theories):

5. Expectation disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980), which stems from customer satisfaction literature, deals with comparisons between expectations and experiences, and how discrepancies between them result in dissatisfaction.

6. The gap model (Zeithaml et al., 1990) explains dissatisfaction as a gap between initial expectations and perceived performance, whereas satisfaction occurs when expectations and performance meet.
7. Expectancy violations theory (Burgoon 1993) explains how expectations can be violated either positively (i.e., an experience is better than expected) or negatively (i.e. an experience is worse than expected), resulting in emotional responses.

In the literature review, we searched for articles mentioning these theories in selected, well-known public relations journals (replicating the journal selection by Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2015): *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *Corporate Reputation Review*, *Journal of Communication Management*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, and *Public Relations Review*. We searched the journal sites in April 2018 using the names of the theories as search terms without setting any time limitations. The initial search returned 229 articles, which were reduced to 159 articles by omitting book reviews (18 articles), bibliographies (16), duplicates (1), and articles to which we had no access (35). This final sample was then analyzed to determine the extent to which the theory appeared in the study: whether the theory was mentioned or whether it was used to study expectations. The analysis was done by reading the abstracts and using text search tools. The results of the literature review are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Number of articles mentioning expectation theories and number of articles using these theories to study expectations (in parenthesis)

	Relationship formation		Relationship maintenance		Relationship evaluation		
	Social exchange theory	Expectancy value theory	Symbolic interaction theory	Expectation states theory	Expectancy disconfirmation theory	The gap model	Expectancy violations theory
Corporate Communications: An International Journal	14 (2)	2 (1)	2 (1)	0	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Corporate Reputation Review	3 (0)	1 (1)	2 (0)	0	1 (1)	0	1 (1)
Journal of Communication Management	12 (0)	5 (1)	2 (0)	0	0	0	0
Journal of Public Relations Research	23 (6)	4 (1)	6 (3)	0	0	0	3 (2)
Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly	7 (4)	9 (3)	3 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	0	1 (1)
Public Relations Review	23 (2)	2 (0)	23 (1)	0	0	1 (0)	4 (3)
TOTAL	**82 (14)**	**23 (7)**	**38 (5)**	**1 (1)**	**3 (3)**	**2 (1)**	**10 (8)**

As shown in Table 2, the theories addressing relationships in the broadest sense—social exchange theory, expectancy-value theory, and symbolic interaction—have the most hits in our sample. For example, it was quite usual to find general references to these theories when relationships were described as expected reciprocal benefits (e.g., Hung, 2005; Jo, 2006). However, when we narrowed the analysis to determine whether the articles apply the theories to study expectations, the numbers became dramatically lower. Only 14 of the 82 articles mentioning social exchange theory used it to study expectations, as do 7 of 23 articles mentioning expectancy-value theory and 5 of 38 articles mentioning symbolic interaction.

The appearance was lower for theories more narrowly designed to study particularly expectations—expectation states theory, expectancy disconfirmation theory, the gap model, and expectancy violations theory. Even without time limits on our searches, only 16 articles addressed these four theories, with expectancy violations theory receiving more than half of the hits. Of these 16 articles, only 13 used the theories to study expectations.

The majority of the studies that used the theories to study expectations addressed expectations as part of organization-public relations (e.g., Hung, 2005; Kim and Sung, 2016; Ledingham, 2003), especially in relation to social exchange theory. Some studies focused on the expectations of certain groups, such as investors (Helm, 2007) and supply chain partners (Gambetti and Giovanardi, 2013). Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to study expectations. For example, Schultz and Wehmeier (2010) placed expectations as triggers in their conceptual model that explains the institutionalization of corporate social responsibility, whereas Lee and Chung (2018) ran an experiment of company-cause fit explained by expectations, and Kim (2014) measured expectations in a crisis situation. Among the quantitative studies, expectation violations theory seemed to be the preferred theory for measuring expectations in our sample (see Kim, 2014; Lee and Chung, 2018; Roh, 2017; Sung and Kim, 2014).

Based on the literature review and analysis, we conclude that expectation theories do appear, but are not strongly utilized in public relations research. Papers focused on conceptual development (Heath, 2006; Olkkonen, 2017; Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2015; Schultz and Wehmeier, 2010) and expectation measurement (Bruning et al., 2006; Ledingham et al., 1999; Lee and Chung, 2018; Roh, 2017; Sung and Kim, 2014) were both rare even though our sample spans multiple decades. This observation further widens the gap in public relations related to expectations—not only are expectations rarely conceptualized, but public relations scholars also have limited exposure to expectation theories. However, as these seven theories indicate, expectations affect relationships in many ways, starting from their formation and continuing throughout their maintenance and outcome evaluation. In the next section, we address the conceptual and theoretical gaps related to expectations in public relations and elaborate on expectations as normative, predictive, and destructive assessments, that each affect relationship formation, maintenance and evaluation.

Expectations in relationships: normative, predictive, and destructive

In the previous sections, we have discussed, on one hand, a widely shared interest in expectations in public relations, particularly as they potentially provide organizations with valuable information when developing and managing intangible assets, such as reputations and relationships. On the other hand, we have identified a lack of conceptual precision and theoretical rooting of expectations in public relations. Therefore, we dedicate this section to discuss what the field seems to be missing in its current understanding and treatment of expectations and how expectation theories can add to the current understanding. We divide this discussion into three sections: expectations as normative, predictive, and destructive assessments.

We aim to bring forth different dimensions of expectations that go beyond treating them uniformly—beyond expectations as something organizations should aim to "meet" or "exceed" (e.g, Coombs, 2007; Kim and Ferguson, 2018; Podnar and Golob, 2007; Westhues and Einwiller, 2006). In particular, we draw on customer satisfaction literature, using the distinction of "should" and "will" expectations to distinguish normative expectations based on values and predictive expectations based on likelihood (e.g., Summers and Granbois, 1977). Furthermore, we utilize the conceptualizations of expectation misalignments as expectation gaps and expectation violations (e.g., Burgoon, 1993; Zeithaml et al., 1993). Figure 1 presents the three dimensions: normative ideals (positive expectations), predictive realistic assessments (positive or negative expectations) and destructive misalignments (negative expectations). Next, we describe each dimension and discuss their relevance for different stages of relationships.

	Relationship formation	*Relationship maintenance*	*Relationship evaluation*
+ *Normative "What should be"*	Ideal relationship rewards and costs	Ideal relationship roles, interaction and power relations	Ideal relationship outcomes
Predictive "What is" (positive)	Realistic relationship rewards or costs (positive)	Realistic relationship roles, interaction and power relations (positive)	Realistic relationship outcomes (positive)
Predictive "What is" (negative)	Realistic relationship rewards or costs (negative)	Realistic relationship roles, interaction and power relations (negative)	Realistic relationship outcomes (negative)
Destructive "What is wrong" -	Misaligned relationship rewards or costs	Misaligned relationship roles, interaction and power relations	Misaligned relationship outcomes

Figure 1. Expectations as normative, predictive, and destructive assessments in different stages of relationships

Expectations as normative assessments

Expectations as normative assessments refers to how expectations are influenced by the underlying values that guide assessments, forming ideal expectations that describe what "should" be (Miller, 1977; Summers and Granbois, 1977; Swan et al., 1982; Zeithaml et al., 1993). Referring to expectation theories, the normative dimension of expectations can aid understanding the different ways in which expectations can affect relationship stages. During the formation of relationships, normative expectations set the ideal rewards and costs (social exchange theory), which are then applied to assess the likelihood of whether they will be realized in the relationship (expectancy-value theory). As observed by Hung (2005), expectations further affect what kind of a relationship is formed between organizations and their stakeholders—whether, for example, the relationship is expected to be reciprocal. In the relationship maintenance phase, ideals provide the basis for how roles, interactions and power

relationships are assessed (symbolic interaction and expectation states theory). Finally, the evaluation of relationship outcomes draws on normative expectations to determine whether the outcomes meet the ideal level and whether any detected disconfirmation, gaps, or violations are acceptable (expectancy disconfirmation theory, the gaps model, and expectancy violations theory).

Normative expectations have relevance to public relations research that focuses on organizational values, identity, purpose and social responsibility, as these areas often stress the importance of congruence with stakeholders' values (e.g. Brummette and Zoch, 2016; Kim and Ferguson 2018). Furthermore, normative expectations are typical sources of conflicts and tensions because stakeholders' normative expectations can differ from organizational goals and action, and organizations typically deal with a myriad of normative expectations from their publics (Seiffert-Brockmann and Thummes, 2017). Normative expectations, therefore, relate to what different publics generally value, independent of the existence of any individual organization.

Expectations as predictive assessments

One of the most pressing gaps in the current understanding of expectations in public relations arises because expectations are treated predominantly (and often *only*) as positive anticipations that organizations can fulfill to develop or maintain important intangible assets. This "positivity bias" can make analyses of expectations less precise because it "demerits expectations close to observable data and presumes that one automatically know what is meant by expectations and how to identify what they are" (Olkkonen, 2017: p. 28). Thus, we argue that the public relations literature lacks analytical thinking that recognizes expectations as positive *and negative* constructs, manifested in expectations as predictive assessments.

As noted above, 'will' expectations differ from normative expectations as they are predictive rather than value-based. As such, predictive expectations are based on likelihood (Summers and Granbois, 1977) that is influenced by explicit facts and implicit cues (Ojasalo, 2001) and guided by direct and indirect previous experiences (Miller, 1977; Summers and Granbois, 1977; Swan et al., 1982; Woodruff et al., 1983; Zeithaml et al., 1993). Predictive assessments may be related to the likelihood of both positive and negative events and scenarios, so these assessments of "what is" rather than what "should be" can raise positive as well as negative expectations. In other words, predictive expectations can equally convey support or lack of support (such as skepticism and distrust) toward organizations. Notably, dissatisfying and disappointing prior experiences with a particular organization can lead to intentionally lowered or negative expectations that are meant to avoid future disappointments (cf., Nesse, 1990; Van Dijk et al., 2003).

The predictive and, consequently, the positive and negative sides of expectations are implicitly present in expectation theories related to relationship formation. For example, social exchange theory explains how the decision to engage in a relationship consists of an interplay between the expected costs and rewards (Blau 1964; Cook and Rice, 2013; Homans, 1961). When the expected costs are too high, the final expectation can be negative and prevent interactions. In the vocabulary of expectancy value theory (Atkinson, 1957; Wigfield and Eccles, 2000), one can end up expecting a negative value from investing resources in relationship interactions if obtaining the desired value from the interactions is considered to be highly unlikely. In relationship maintenance and evaluation, negative expectations have a key role because they are signs of dissatisfaction that can hinder or prevent interaction. For example, in a recent study on social media expectations, Navarro et al. (2017) found that public relations practitioners overestimate what is expected from company channels and consequently offer content not desired by their publics. We find potential for more detailed

analyses about negative predictive expectations because they could explain how publics sometimes actively maintain negative perceptions and assessments about organizations, making them relevant for scholars interested in how intangible assets such as reputations and trust are damaged.

Expectations as destructive assessments

In addition to normative assessments (based on ideals) and predictive assessments (based on likelihood), destructive assessments are a third dimension that explains expectations in relationships. By destructive, we mean that expectations can focus on bringing forth "what is not"—the crucial elements that cause disconfirmations, gaps, and violations between values and reality (Burgoon, 1993; Oliver, 1980; Zeithaml et al., 1990), resulting in misalignments that prevent relationships from forming or continuing. Such misalignments can equally result when organizations are failing to meet positive expectations or when they are unable to overcome negative expectations.

At the start of a relationship, misaligned relationship rewards and costs can prevent it from forming because either the predicted rewards level is expected to be too low, or the costs level is expected to be too high. For example, Brummette and Zoch (2016) recently demonstrated the importance of responding to stakeholders' value-driven expectations during relationship formation. After this phase, misalignments involve relationship roles, interactions, and power, and if the experienced relationship induces mainly negative predictive expectations that contradict realistic positive expectations and normative expectations, the relationship is likely to end, either abruptly or through more subtle withdrawal from engagement.

While the destructive dimension of expectations has been present in public relations research, particularly in studies that relate to reputational damage and legitimacy gaps (e.g.,

Brønn, 2012; Coombs, 2000; Kim et al., 2019; Reichart, 2003), more remains to be explored, especially related to stigmas associated with negative expectations, and publics' negative attitudes and behavior toward organizations (see, e.g., Lievonen et al., 2018). We elaborate on these aspects and other promising areas of expectation research in public relations in the next section.

Meeting and failing expectations: Toward a nuanced understanding

No single explanation for expectations exists because they have normative, predictive and destructive dimensions, which each affect relationships. Consequently, we advocate for developing a more nuanced understanding of what it means to "meet" expectations and making sense of the different ways expectations affect organizations' relations with their publics. To understand the full impacts of expectations on areas such as reputation management, relationship management, and organizational responsibility, it is essential to address both the positive and the negative aspects of expectations. So far, the impacts and implications of positive—especially normative—expectations on public relations are quite well understood, but the impacts of negative predictive expectations are much less known. We argue that understanding negative expectations can clarify how expectations not only can threaten and jeopardize but actively damage and even destroy intangible assets such as reputations and legitimacy by creating and maintaining negative assessments of organizations. Expectations, therefore, entail risks related not only to failure to meet positive expectations (resulting in, for example, reputational threats) but also to active maintenance of reputational stigmas, irresponsibility, illegitimacy, dissatisfaction, distrust, and negative engagement, manifested in negative expectations. Figure 2 summarizes the implications of meeting and failing to meet positive and negative expectations.

+		
Normative "What should be"	**Meeting positive expectations:**	**Failing positive expectations:**
	Reputational benefits	Reputational threats
	Perceived responsibility	Questioned or conflicted responsibility
	Reinforced legitimacy	Weakened legitimacy
Predictive "What is" (positive)	Trust	Lack of trust
	Satisfaction	Dissatisfaction
	Positive engagement	Disengagement
Predictive "What is" (negative)	**Meeting negative expectations:**	**Failing negative expectations:**
	Reputational stigmas	Reputational recovery
	Perceived (deliberate) irresponsibility	Repaired responsibility
	Legitimacy gaps, contested legitimacy	Repaired legitimacy
	Distrust	Repaired trust
	Anticipated dissatisfaction	Repaired satisfaction
Destructive "What is wrong"	Negative engagement	Discontinued negative engagement or positive engagement
-		

Figure 2. Implications of meeting and failing positive and negative expectations and the creation and destruction of intangible assets.

As illustrated in Figure 2, meeting positive expectations contributes to maintaining and building intangible assets, whereas failing positive expectations weakens them. Meeting negative expectations actively aids the destruction of intangible assets, whereas failing to meet negative expectations has a positive effect, indicating that the organization can overcome negative expectations.

Discussion

The conceptualizations and theorizations of expectations stem from fields outside public relations, primarily social psychology and customer satisfaction research, yet public relations scholars frequently refer to expectations. We argue that public relations research has addressed expectations as a uniform, seemingly easy-to-understand concept, when in reality, they are a complex concept and phenomenon. To truly understand expectations and how they influence public relations, it is necessary to acknowledge the different dimensions of

expectations. In this article, we have examined the literature and conceptual dimensions of expectations and theorized how the normative, predictive, and destructive dimensions of expectations affect intangible assets in public relations. We propose that the value of expectations lies in their mediating effect: they enable and destroy the creation of organizational intangible assets without which relationships between organizations and publics cannot be constructed.

We see much potential in existing expectation theories to further theorize expectations in public relations, especially because the conceptual development and use of measurements have both been scarce. Relationship formation theories deal with the ground rules for establishing relationships, so these theories are perhaps the most relevant for explaining the normative dimension of expectations. Relationship maintenance theories deal with assessments in relationships, making these theories especially relevant to the predictive dimension of expectations. Finally, relationship evaluation theories can explain the crucial turning points in relationships, making these theories particularly interesting to the destructive dimension of expectations. We call for studies testing the proposed mediating role of expectations in the creation and destruction of organizational intangible assets in different settings. Moreover, future studies could investigate whether changes in intangible assets can lead to changes in expectations.

Finally, negative expectations, in particular, can help public relations scholars understand the flipside of the much more discussed positive expectations. For example, meeting positive expectations can contribute to strengthening reputations, while fulfilling negative expectations can explain the active maintenance of unfavorable reputations and reputational stigmas. We hope this article will spark further research on expectations in public relations, and inspire public relations scholars to tackle the dynamic phenomenon and

concept of expectations, advancing precise, comprehensive theorization of expectations in public relations.

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