



INWASCON

ISSN: 2710-5873 (Online)

CODEN: ITMNBH

GENERAL ARTICLE

AGRICULTURE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS STUDENTS?

Wan Nurul Maisarah Wan Faisal, G. Manickam Govindaraju

School of Media and Communication, Taylor's University Lakeside Campus

*Corresponding Author Email: propassiontulc@gmail.com

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Final year public relations project (FYP) with actual clients is crucial for the students as this project requires complete involvement, transfer of knowledge to application, and gives a glimpse of what awaits us in the industry. As public relations students, we look forward to this exercise as this enhances our constrained view on public relations which is limited to maintaining the client's brand, reputation, or image, and managing communication as well as crisis, especially for corporate organisations. Little prepared me for what I was about to experience for my FYP. When our lecturer informed us that our FYP client was Department of Agriculture (DOA), Malaysia, my friends and I were confused because we did not expect that. Coming from an urban setting, we have almost zero exposure to agriculture except for occasionally watering plants in our homes. Through our project advisor and lecturer, Ms. G. Manickam Govindaraju's guidance and encouragement, we had a mindset shift as we realise that clients can come from any industry and as potential PR practitioners, we need to research, learn, and understand our clients to serve them better. Our team, known as ProPassion Consult had no prior knowledge of the Department of Agriculture and their function and importance to the nation, even more so of the importance of certified seeds and plants. Though we were fully aware of our role as a student consultancy in spreading awareness on the subject matter, how were we going to spread awareness on a topic that seemed so foreign to us?



We were determined to educate ourselves on the process of certifying seeds and plants in Malaysia, and their role in the community. Our campaign, called my TULENseed, aimed at creating awareness and promoting the importance of certified seeds and plant materials in ensuring that the nurseries only sell authentic plants. "Initially, I struggled with this campaign as I had zero knowledge of the terminology used regarding agriculture," explained Iman Azmey, the project leader of ProPassion. "However, as time passed, I understood the importance of putting in the effort to educate myself on DOA's scheme, to ensure the accuracy and success of our myTULENseed campaign".

Throughout our campaign, we were introduced to a new and exciting environment that challenged us every step of the way. In order to understand the importance of seed certification, DOA took us on an experiential learning trip to a pineapple nursery in Sepang. This was our first trip to a farm which was in a remote area. It was an exciting trip for all of us where we were exposed to much information on authentic pineapple plants, ways to identify the types of pineapple, the taste, requirements, and so forth. This opportunity was well used to obtain content for our campaign. Videos and infographics were created and used for social media promotional activities myTULENseed campaign. Iman said, "When the DOA explained how the scheme works, that's when I realized that this scheme is extremely crucial to sustain the quality of our agricultural industry,"



Reaching the end of this project, our views of public relations have enhanced significantly and have built a straight pathway for future success as undergraduate students in the public relations career scope. As a growing public relations student, exposure to this project has built a closer connection to public relations, and how it is a necessity to every field, career, and our overall daily lives. Public relations is about bringing changes in people's lives and bettering the nation. This project introduced us to the endless range that this field offers, and its capability in venturing into any field imaginable.

The DOA's Plant and Seed Certification Scheme (SPBT) aims at creating a functional and standardized procedure that encourages the certification of plants and seeds to produce a trusting and legitimate source of food for consumers. Without the implementation of the SPBT, consumers are unaware and blind-sighted to the safety and legitimacy of their fruits and vegetables, and as PR students, we seek to educate the public on the importance of this scheme to advance the agricultural sector in Malaysia and introduce this scheme nationwide.

An online forum on 25th November 2022 entitled "Seed Certification in



Preserving Purity of Crop Varieties” will delve deeper into the process of seed certification, and its impact and role for both the community, as well as the state of crop varieties. Three panel speakers from different backgrounds in the agriculture industry will be discussing the importance, issues, and trends of seed certification to the nation.

As agriculture plays a crucial role in our lives, it is important to educate ourselves on matters concerning the sector as we often take things for

granted and seldom seek information in other fields. Public relations is about recognizing our role in the community and taking action to bring positive changes, and it's not too late to recognise our role in the community.

ProPassion Consult is a Final Year Public Relations Event Consultancy module at School of Media and Communication, Taylor's University that aims at creating impact and bringing change in the community.

