

MASTER'S THESIS

Business and society: an integrated study of corporate philanthropy and organization-public relationships in China

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**Business and Society: An Integrated Study of Corporate Philanthropy and
Organization–Public Relationships in China**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the organization–public relationships of companies (state-owned, private, and multinational) operating in China with their publics during corporate philanthropic process. Nineteen participants from the companies and NGOs were interviewed. The results of this study offer public relations practitioners and educators a picture of the forms, motivations, characteristics, and environment of corporate philanthropy in China, and the relationship types, cultivation strategies, and outcomes that companies built with their publics after undertaking philanthropic activities. The multinational companies (MNC) interviewed have more strategic philanthropic programs than their Chinese counterparts; Chinese companies can therefore learn from MNCs. The organizational economics, organizational characteristics, forms, and motivations of corporate philanthropy influence the relationships between the organizations (companies) and the publics, which were considered as relationship antecedents. Nineteen cultivation strategies were identified in corporate philanthropy in China; one new strategy, being an opinion leader, was proposed. Communal relationship, exchange relationship, contractual relationship, and covenantal relationship were relationship types that companies built with the publics when undertaking corporate philanthropy in China. For the qualities of relationship outcomes, a company’s philanthropic programs usually led to positive outcomes, except in some isolated cases (e.g., scandals involving transparency problem with regards to donation or the media exposing that companies failed to donate as much as they promised). Control mutuality existed to some extent between companies and NGOs during cooperation. The different relationship-cultivation strategies led to different relationship outcomes. This study also summarized the cultivation strategies that lead to satisfaction, trust, commitment, and control mutuality, which could inspire practitioners when they undertake corporate philanthropic programs. The study concluded listing implications for public relations scholars, public relations practitioners, and companies in China that undertake corporate philanthropy or are planning to undertake corporate philanthropic programs in the future.

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