



Cover Page



PUBLIC RELATION PRACTICES MEDIATED BY NEW SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Debangana Ganguly

Assistant Professor in Mass Communication and Journalism

St. Xavier's College, Burdwan, West Bengal. India

Abstract

This paper purposes to open up the ever-increasing impact of social media on Public Relation (henceforth PR) practices involved in different multinational enterprises, small businesses, corporate houses, not-for-profit organizations, educational, public or government-institutions. These organizations may have PR Professionals on Staff, or they may contact a PR firm or marketing agency to handle their media relations. PR practitioners generally have to recourse to different media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc. to showcase their bands, ideas, activities and innovations for making correspondence with the stakeholders or public with a view to have effective feedback or review so as to make betterment and more profit for the company. Social media thus acts as a bridge between the PR practitioners and the customers creating a dynamic, interactive and bonding-focused communication channel for building brand awareness and managing company's reputation and images. It is therefore utilized for the rapid dissemination of information facilitated with a direct two-way communication with the stakeholders and thus provides arena for amplifying messages through able practitioners or influencers. Thus the precinct of PR has undergone a significant transformation with the emergence of social media. As long as the social media did not come into the picture, the PR practitioners traditionally used to rely on methods like writing press releases, brain-storming public relation campaigns, advertisement, content writing, public speaking, media coverage and events to shape public narrative and build relationships. But these traditional PR techniques have changed as a result of this shift which encourages professionals to consider unconventional ways. For PR professionals social media's capacity to spread information, facilitate direct communication and offer real-time feedback has brought forward both new opportunities and difficulties. This article looks into the role of social media in public relations, analyzing advanced methods, new social media trends in PR and to help PR professionals succeed in this dynamic environment.

Keywords – Communication, Global audience, Stakeholders, Brand awareness, Social media

INTRODUCTION

The first social media site "Six Degrees" was created in 1997. It took only mere six years to storm the world creating one of the largest sensations in human history. According to Backlinko, a startling 4.48 billion people use social media worldwide (B, 2021). The advent of the social platforms like (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, My Space, Friendster, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok (banned in India), You Tube, WhatsApp, etc. aroused the attention of the entire world creating unprecedented space for public relations (PR) practitioners to operate on. These new platforms have radically changed the Public Relation Industry and left practitioners with a choice- either adapt or die.

Until the inception of the new modern social media platforms equipped with internet and Web technology the PR industry had been running traditionally characterized by the following four defining characteristics: - (Wilcox. D.L. Cameron, 2016).

- Centralized / top to down
- Costly in terms of publicity/ advertisement.
- Recruitment or staffed by professional gatekeepers or editors or publishers.
- Mostly One-way Communication with limited feedback on Radio/TV channel or press release.

With the invention of the internet guided social media, these traditional characteristics have been effectively invalidated. PR materials are no longer centralised and can be operated by anyone using technology and platforms that are accessible to



Cover Page



all. There is no more cost-barrier surrounding the PR operation on the mass media platforms. Indeed social media technologies have definitely lowered the costs of collaborating, sharing and producing, thus providing revolutionary new forms of interaction and problem solving. (Shirky, 2010). Social media as of now has appeared with new methods of creating relationships with brands. Instead of huge budgets on traditional advertising mediums like Press, radio, T.V, Print and billboard coverages, now is understanding and satisfying the needs and wants of the customers with comparatively a defined budget and more clear social media strategy. As a case study, the Coca Cola name campaign is still one of the most successful campaigns in the PR and advertising world, because it was havocly utilized ad shared by social media. All it took was people finding their names on bottles and posting across all the different social media platforms: Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. There were even hashtags to follow the trend Share A Coke. (Anya, 2023)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The current trend of research on social media is clearly understandable from the contemporary review studies. The publication period between 1997 and 2017, total 132 papers focusing on different aspects of social media were reviewed by Kapoor et al (2017) (Kapoor K.K., P.Dwivedi, & S). It was found that these reviews centre round people's behaviours on SM according to organizational purposes, applicability of SM as a marketing tool, risks as well as adverse influences of SM usage etc. They also found that researchers utilized qualitative, quantitative and a mix of both methods. Particularly, qualitative methods were applied in form of interviews and quantitative methods were conducted through surveys or for statistical analysis. Bhimani et al (al, 2018) , concluded through analysing 111 articles that SM should be considered as enabler and driver of innovation with behaviour and resource-based perspectives. (Puntoadi, 2011) , mentions some significant plus points of SM : First, it has become a Personal Bonding Platform open to everyone. Different SM platforms provide opportunities for individuals to communicate, discuss and even gain popularity in the world of SM. Secondly, Puntoadi considered that SM has become an extraordinary marketing channel replacing the traditional media platforms. Third, SM opens up opportunities for closer interaction with consumers. The SM marketers are allowed to understand consumer habits, interact personally and build deeper relationships by dint of two-way nature of communication. Finally, he noted that it is only SM that allows information to spread quickly. Certain products or content can easily go viral providing the potential for wide and wide exposure.

Yung Chang in his article Looking back, moving forward: A review and reflection of the organization Public relationship (OPR) research presented a comprehensive review of 156 relevant studies form 1998 to 2016 and categorizes them into five main cluster, which include the outcomes, antecedents, mediation, process and structure of OPR. In 2021, Sandra Braun in his article "Status of Social Media Public Relations Research: An analysis of recent developments and trends examined the development of SM and PR research by analysing 189 articles published between 2008 and 2018 from two leading academic PR Journals. It focused on research topics, research subjects, theoretical frameworks, methodological Approaches and research perspectives. His key findings particularly suggest a boom in production, a trend toward more theoretical rigor, a set of newly favoured theories, a more balanced methodological approach. Aaron Smith and Maeve Duggan in the article "Social Media Update: 42% online adults use multiple Social Networking Sites, but Facebook Remains the Platform of choice (2013)" reviewed the use of social networking by online adults in 2013. The findings may be used as insight for companies, firms and practitioners to develop and execute an efficient SM Plan or Campaign. In accordance with the target market and objective, brands must choose the best SM channels. A strong brand identity is developed through consistent brand positioning and messaging on SM platform. To maintain uniformity throughout all SM interactions, brand language and tone precisely. SM gives businesses the chance to interact directly with their customers, establishing loyalty and partnerships (Genster et al, 2013, Genster. S; De Vries, L. & Leeftang. P.S, Popularity of Brand posts on brand fan pages: An Investigation of the effects of Social Media marketing; Journal of Interactive marketing, 26(2), 83-91



Cover Page



OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study is to identify and evaluate the various platforms of social media in the digital age and to analyse the impact of social media strategies implemented by PR practitioners in organization. Additionally, this article has been undertaken to fulfil the following purposes:

- 1) To build and maintain a positive reputation for an organization by the PR practitioners using different platforms of social media.
- 2) To manage relationship with Key Stakeholders through social media maintaining speed, transparency and consistency.
- 3) To establish a strategic framework for determining target audience and channel or platform selection in accordance with the demand and image of the brand or product.
- 4) To ascertain the influence of social media for attaining positive public image.
- 5) To analyse how PR professionals can quickly share content, participate in real-time conversation and track public opinion and to develop brand identities.
- 6) To suggest training for PR professionals to handle negative feedback constructively and refine strategies for impactful communication.

Research Methodology

Whenever a PR practitioner has to analyse and make decisions about a certain business, sales, etc. data are to be collected. This collected data will help in making some decisions about the course of action or performance of a particular business. Thus, methodology of PR research starts with the identification of the problem and then the PR practitioner decides his research or analysis approach with the sample of his study. The practitioner is new faced with the task of systematically collecting reliable and valid evidences upon which he can base his findings. Reliable and valid evidences are accepted as 'Data' or facts which are observed and measurable phenomena. The purpose of gathering and summarizing data is to transform them into information.

Before going into the methods of data collection, let us understand what data collection is and how it helps in various fields. The main sources of the data collection methods are 'Data'. Data can be classified into two types, namely Primary data and Secondary data. Primary data or raw data is a type of information that is collected from the first-hand source. It is original and collected directly from the source. It is highly reliable although it may incur higher cost and consume time.

Primary Data Collection Method – The primary data or raw data collection method is classified into two types. They are:

- 1) **Quantitative Data Collection Method** – A data that can be counted and expressed in terms of numbers or quantity is called quantitative data. It is based on mathematical calculations using various formats like close-ended questions, correlation and regression methods, mean, median or mode measures. This method is cheaper than qualitative data collection methods and it can be applied in a short duration of time. It can be used to find patterns and averages, make predictions, text casual relationships, and generalize result to wider population. Such research is widely used in the natural and social sciences: biology, chemistry, psychology, economics, sociology, marketing, etc. As for example of quantitative research question we can ask: What is the demographic make-up of India in 2025? How has the average temperature changed globally over the last century?
- Quantitative research methods may be used for descriptive, correlational or experimental research. In descriptive research, the researcher simply seeks for an overall summary of the study variables. In correlational research, the relationship between the study variables are investigated. And in experimental research, it is examined systematically whether there is a cause and effect relationship between variables. Correlational and experimental



Cover Page



research can both be used to formally test hypotheses or predictions using statistics. The results may be generalised to broader populations based on the sampling method used.

Researchers may have to depend on quantitative data when they require to quantify attributes, attitudes, behaviours and the desired variables with a motive to either agree with or oppose the hypothesis of a specific phenomenon by contextualizing the data obtained via surveying or interviewing of the study. The researchers use the following collection method for procuring quantitative data for the study:

Probability sampling – It is quite time-consuming and expensive. Hence this method is only suitable in cases wherein the population are similar in characteristics and the researcher has money, time and access to the whole population. It is a defining method of sampling carried out by utilizing some form of random selection.

Interview – Interviewing people is a standard method for data collection and the researcher asks only a standard set of questionnaires and nothing more than that. Interview may be held through Telephone or face-to-face.

Surveys – It is held by using a set of closed-ended questions with pre- structured yes/no, rating scale or multiple choices that the data can be transferred into number. Surveys may be carried out to collect demographic data on age, gender, behaviour frequency or product preference.

Experiment – Experimental quantitative research design is made up of a scientific approach. It is the way or method by means of which the researcher justifies a hypothesis and establishes systematically the casual relationship among the variables.

- 2) **Qualitative Data Collection Method** – In the process of evaluation this, most commonly used qualitative method can be classified in three broad classes:

Observation method – This method varies according to the degree to which the observer actively participants in the scene. At one extreme the observer is a non-participant. He/she neither participates nor interveners in any way. As for example, a researcher or observer who is interested in studying children's social behaviour may stand outside a playground to observe. Certain behaviour however are difficult to be observed as they occur rarely or privately. It is confined to one particular group of people, setting and activity.

In-depth Interview – It often plays a central role in the process of understanding human behaviours and experiences. These conversations are personal and thorough, geared towards uncovering an individual's experiences, perspectives and emotions.

Document review – Document analysis is a systematic procedure for receiving or evaluating documents – both printed and computer-based and Internet – transmitted electronic material. Like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge. Documents contain text and images that have been recorded without a researcher's intervention.

B. Secondary Data: - Such data come 'pre-packaged ' and the content reflecting the fact that they have been produced by someone other than the researchers and will not have been produced specifically for the purpose of the research project. The data none the less will have some relevance to the research in terms of the information they contain, and the task for the researchers is to extract that information and re -use it in the context of his/her own research project (Denscombe, 2021, P-268). The research will need to be analysed alongside other research sources and date in the same subject area in order to confirm, dispute or discuss the findings in a wider context.

Secondary Data Collection Method: -

The sources of secondary data are the textbooks, literature review, articles review, papers, journals, articles which comment on or analyse research, dictionaries encyclopaedia and similar materials written or produced beforehand. These data may be used to find out expert's findings, analysis or perspectives on the issue. Of these methods however Literature Review is regarded as the most common method. H. Aveyard and C. Bradbury Jones (2019) identified more than 35 items to describe different types of literature reviews of which systematic reviews are worth mentioning. A systematic review is a structured literature review which identifies all of the relevant research and



Cover Page



which involves a rigorous search strategy in order to answer a focused research question. This kind of review can include both quantitative and qualitative studies. Apart from literature review, Grounded theory is also used to create an explanatory theory based on different data including secondary data. Case studies are also good methods of secondary research. Analysing case studies, the researchers focus on one case study which is analysed in depth or the researchers can examine more than one in order to compare and contrast the important aspects of the research question.

As the criteria and guidance differ for each research project, the researchers should carefully select the sources and that the data being analysed is reliable and relevant to the research question. It also means that he is to be critical and analytic in the analysis and recognition of any potential biasness or limitation in the data. The following are generally used as secondary research method: -

1) Website/Internet -Most data are readily available on the Internet and can be download at the click of a button. However organizations need to select only authentic and reliable websites for data collection.

2) Govt and non-govt documentary - To collect such document some agencies may be deployed. For example, Census bureau, NGOs, Election Commission etc.

3) Libraries - They are a storehouse of important and relevant information and documentary from which desired information can be extracted.

4) Printed materials – Books, Journals, published sources, Newspaper, Diaries, Valuable letter etc are often regarded as authentic sources of collecting secondary data.

5) Unpublished personal sources- They are not easily available compared to the published sources. Research works conducted by teachers and professionals, private record of business organization, statistics maintained by different agencies including govt or non-govt, Corporation, Undertakings etc.

Apart from the above sources, the Blogs, Podcasts, other Internet enabled devices regarded as published and public sources are also used to collect secondary data. Secondary research is a type of desk research. It is a good starting point for any type of research as it enables to see who the key researchers are in the field. It also helps to analyse what research has already been undertaken and identify any gap. Primary research involves gathering data which has not been collected before. Secondary research often comments on and analyses the primary research. Just as in primary research, secondary research designs can be either quantitative, qualitative, or a mixture of both strategies of inquiry

The Use of Both Quantitative and Qualitative methods in the Practice of PR.

Using both data types together provides a comprehensive picture of PR effectiveness. Quantitative data implies what happened on a large scale, whereas qualitative data explains the reasons behind the findings. The combination supports smarter public relations campaigns by aligning media outreach, influencer partnership and content marketing with audience sentiment and brand positioning. It also helps identify risks and crisis in proper time quickly, particularly when PR teams use dedicated tools for tracking PR Key Performance Indicators (KPI) along with sentiment analysis. When PR practitioners combine numbers with narratives, decision-making improves. For example, a spike in negative media coverage (quantitative) paired with customers' interviews revealing concerns (qualitative) indicates a targeted crisis response plan. The holistic integrated approach ensures communication strategies are not just reactive but also proactive, addressing the root causes of issues while managing media relations tactfully. Campaigns become more effective when qualitative metrics guide where to focus effort and qualitative feedback refines messaging. Understanding which social media posts generate engagement and why enables better content creation and distribution.

PR personnel's good storytelling depends on knowing both the facts and the feelings. Quantitative data can highlight the scale of success revealed in the number of media mentions or event attendees. Qualitative insights however reveal the stories or reasons behind those numbers such as how the message resonated, what values it connected with, and what emotional response it sparked. Together thus they help create narratives that build brand loyalty and extend stakeholder's engagement. Thus, the most successful public relations strategies come from combining the both approaches or triangulation. Mixing or



integrating them leads to better PR measurement, more informed communication planning and ultimately stronger reputation management.

ANALYSIS

Role of Social Media in Public Relations

Social media is a groundbreaking device for all Public Relation practitioners because it enables the beneficiary to reach the audience through its different digitalized communication platforms and technologies. Previously it was difficult to interact with the audience or customers relying solely on press releases and traditional media outlets like radio, T.V., phone, etc. But as of now the social media has made the whole world at our fingertips. Now social media influencers have become a driving force in transmitting messages to target audiences. At present a huge percentage of consumers trust influencers over a brand's in-house advertisers.

PR was generally more focused on influential persons such as investors, stakeholders, business partners etc. but with the inception of different social media platforms, enabled with internet/ web technology. These individuals are present on these platforms which can then be used for PR purposes. As both PR and SM are used to build and maintain trust in the company and their products, it is only natural that the two must be synchronized. Both PR and SM are based on communication but SM with its real time messaging amplifies the message allowing PR to be stronger and more impactful. Content published via news releases, emails and other PR related means can last long, spread faster and reach further with the help of social media. Social media has made PR more friendly to all stakeholders of a business, resulting in a new area of marketing. This helps companies to be more cordial, inviting and approachable in terms of this two-way communication channel. Thus both the SM and PR have undergone a transformation into a redistribution of nature and function. The following table upholds the specific functionalities, utilities and strategic outcome of the new reality.

Table 1. – Deeper Analysis of Transformed Power Dynamics and Core Functions

Platform	PR Utility	Example
Facebook / Instagram	Brand storytelling, visual identity, community building	Coca-Cola's campaigns with user-generated photos
X (Twitter)	Real-time updates, crisis management, media relations	Government press offices and journalists' exchanges
LinkedIn	Professional branding, thought leadership	Company culture and CSR posts
YouTube / TikTok	Video-based engagement, influencer marketing	Product demos and CSR storytelling

The table clarifies that SM platforms have distributed influence, choice and participation of the individual or community democratically to shape public narrative. The PR practitioners also have come out from the domain of controlled message communicated through journalistic gatekeeper to the direct-to-public engagement, crisis and reputation management. They have been made by SM platforms on integral part of a continuous 24 x 7 process of social listening and real time response. In fine, SM has not only provided new tools for old practices; it has dramatically changed the power distribution. Now PR practitioners are not merely engaged in message control, but also in community building within a constant re-generating digital public sphere.

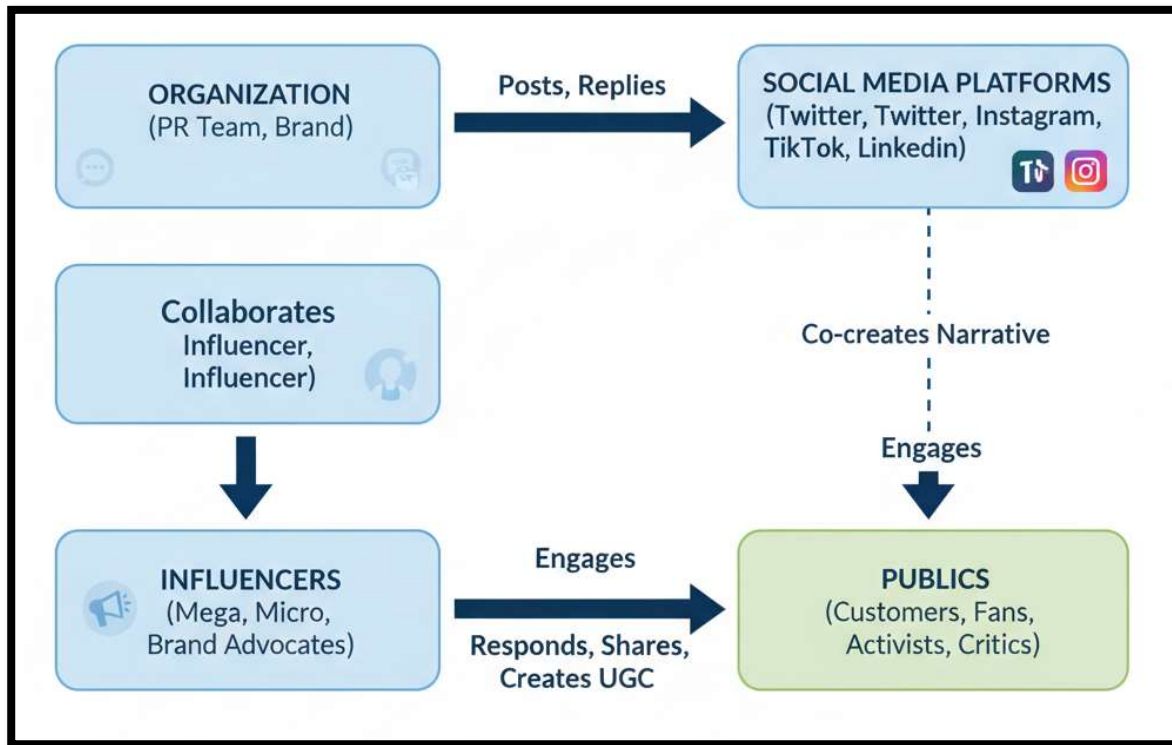


Fig. 1: Mediation of public relations through new social media platforms

CONCLUSION

Unquestionably, the role of social media in public relations is revolutionized. By moving the emphasis from one-way messages to dynamic, two-way conversations that create stronger connections with audiences, it has completely redesigned conventional PR strategies. Being flexible is now essential as platforms and technologies develop further; it is no longer an option. The future of public relations is being shaped by emerging trends like social commerce, short-form video content, and AI-driven analytics, which require professionals to stay creative and proactive. PR teams confidently traverse the intricacies of the social media world by shifting and utilizing analytics, customized content, and integrated campaigns. To ensure they are prepared to handle the demands of a fast-paced, digital-first world, PR professionals need now reconsider and improve their approaches. Social media is an essential part of contemporary PR success, not merely a technology. Get ahead by investigating new channels, trying out imaginative content, and using analytics to guide company's advertising. In the rapidly changing digital era, public relations professionals can take their businesses to new heights of influence, trust, and engagement by embracing innovation.

REFERENCES

1. Breakenridge, D. (2008). PR 2.0: New media, new tools, new audiences. FT Press.
2. Carr, C. T., & Hayes, R. A. (2015). Social media: Defining, developing, and divining. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 23(1), 46–65.
3. Castells, M. (2009). *Communication power*. Oxford University Press.



Cover Page



4. Coombs, W. T. (2014). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
5. Dodd, M. D., & Supa, D. W. (2014). Conceptualizing and measuring corporate social advocacy. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 14(1), 15-27.
6. Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90–92.
7. Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
8. Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
9. Kent, M. L. (2010). Directions in social media for professionals and scholars. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of public relations* (pp. 643–656). SAGE Publications.
10. Li, C., & Bernoff, J. (2008). *Groundswell: Winning in a world transformed by social technologies*. Harvard Business Review Press.
11. Saffer, A. J., Sommerfeldt, E. J., & Taylor, M. (2013). The effects of organizational Twitter interactivity on organization-public relationships. *Public Relations Review*, 39(3), 213–215.
12. Solis, B. (2010). *Engage: The complete guide for brands and businesses to build, cultivate, and measure success in the new web*. John Wiley & Sons.
13. Stacks, D. W. (2016). *Primer of public relations research* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
14. Wright, D. K., & Hinson, M. D. (2017). Tracking how social and other digital media are being used in public relations: A twelve-year study. *Public Relations Journal*, 11(1), 1–30.
15. Dean, B, 2021 – Social network usage & Growth Statistics: How many people use social media in 2022. Retrieved 2021, scholars from <https://backlink.com/social-media> users.
16. Wilcox. D.L, Cameron, H.T. & Reber, B.H (2016), *Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics* (11th ed) Pearson.
17. Cognitive Surplus, Shirky, 2010, New York, Penguin Press
18. Chidinna Anya, Medium, April 214, 2023, 'Impact of Social Media on Public Relations Strategies.
19. 2017- Kapoor, K.K. , Tamilnani . K . Rona, N.P Patil; P.Dwivedi; Y.K. & Nerur. S (2018) – *Advances in Sociak Media research , Past, Present and Future*. *Information Systems Frontiers* 20 (3)
20. Bhimani H. Mention A.L & Bartatier. P.J. (2019), *Social Media and Innovation : A systematic literature review and future research directions*, *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 144, 251-269
21. Puntoandi. D ; *Social Media as a tool in improving Public Relations in the Digital Marketing Era: Qualitative Insights* – 2011