BledCom

The Impact of Public Relations on Organizations and Society

BledCom 2020

27th International Public Relations Research Symposium
July 3, 2020

**Book of Abstracts of the 27th International
Public Relations Research Symposium BledCom**

EDITORS: Dejan Verčič, Ana Tkalac Verčič and Krishnamurthy Sriramesh

Organized by:

University *of Ljubljana*
Faculty *of Social Sciences*

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Welcome!   Dobrodošli!   Swagatam!

For this year's theme, we take our cue from an allied discipline – mass communication/mass media – that has a stream of "media effects" theories dating back at least to the 1980s assessing the various dimensions of mass media effects on individuals, organizations (including families), and society. We feel that our field has not adequately addressed this aspect of our existence, which has led to reputational issues such as public relations being construed mostly as "spin doctoring" on behalf of corporate or similar interests. The Bell Pottinger debacle is a case in point. Our field will benefit from reflection including an assessment of the varied purposes for which public relations has been, and can be, used. Examples are public information campaigns to build societies and nations engaged by NGOs and IGOs (intergovernmental organizations).

COVID-19 has provided us with a global case study of **THE IMPACT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ON ORGANIZATIONS AND THE SOCIETY**. We are living an experiment whose communication angle we will be discussing and analyzing for years to come. We are very sorry that we will not be able to welcome you all personally by Lake Bled, Slovenia, but we are certain that will be possible in 2021.

We have decided BledCom 2020 to be digital and free for all, and so for the 27th year we continue to share our knowledge and learn from each other despite travel restrictions.

We hope you and your loved ones are safe and well.

Thank you!   Lep pozdrav!   Namaste!

Dejan Verčič *University of Ljubljana and Herman & partners* *(Slovenia)*

Dejan Verčič is Professor, Head of Department of Communication and Head of Centre for Marketing and Public Relations at the University of Ljubljana, and Partner in strategic consulting and communication company Herman & partnerji d.o.o., Slovenia. He received his PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK. A Fulbright scholar, recipient of the Pathfinder Award, the highest academic honour bestowed by the Institute for Public Relations (IPR) in New York, and named a Distinguished Public Relations Scholar by the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA). In 1991 he was the founding director of Slovenian national news agency (STA). Organizing the annual International Public Relations Research Symposium – BledCom since 1994.

Ana Tkalac Verčič *University of Zagreb* *(Croatia)*

Ana Tkalac Verčič, Ph.D., is a Full Professor of Marketing communications and Public Relations at the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb, Croatia. She is a former Fulbright scholar and a recipient of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations diploma. Ana Tkalac Verčič has authored, co-authored and edited numerous books including Public Relations Metrics: Research and Evaluation (with B. van Ruler and D. Verčič) and is the author of the first Croatian public relations textbook. She has published more than a 100 papers in various academic journals and serves in various editorial boards such as International Journal of Strategic Communication, Journal of Public Relations Research and Public Relations Review. Throughout her career professor Tkalac Verčič has received numerous awards, most recently, GrandPRx, the award for the development of public relations as a profession. She is currently the president of the Croatian Public Relations Association.

Krishnamurthy Sriramesh *University of Colorado* *(USA)*

Krishnamurthy Sriramesh, is Professor and Director of the Professional Master's Program in Corporate Communication at the University of Colorado, USA. He is recognized for his scholarship on global public relations, culture and public relations, corporate social responsibility, and public relations for development. Over almost 30 years he has advocated the need to reduce ethnocentricity in the public relations body of knowledge and practice in 8 books, over 100 articles and book chapters, and over 120 conference presentations around the world. His rich teaching experience includes teaching at 10 universities on four continents while also delivering seminars/talks in over 40 countries. He has won several awards for teaching and research at different universities including the 2004 Pathfinder Award from the Institute for Public Relations (USA) for "original scholarly research contributing to the public relations body of knowledge."

Aysun Akan *Izmir University of Economics* (*Turkey*) • Aysun Akan, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Communication, Media and Communication Department at Izmir University of Economics and has been a member of the university since 2005. She has degrees in the following subject areas: communication (undergraduate, Faculty of Communication, Ankara University, 1990); politics (MSc, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1999); politics (PhD, Middle East Technical University, 2009). She teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses in communication theories, media research methods, and history of communication. Dr. Akan is author of the journal articles, A critical analysis of the Turkish press discourse against non-Muslims: A case analysis of the newspaper coverage of the 1942 Wealth Tax (Middle Eastern Studies), Coverage of bombings for political advantage: Turkish on-line news reporting of the 2016 Ankara attacks (Social Semiotics), Electricity and Nationalism: Different nationalisms in Turkish news media coverage of Cypriot events (Global Media Journal: Mediterranean Edition), Studies in a Dying Culture: Kemalist Columnists' Coverage of the Kurdish Peace Initiative (Athens Journal of History). Dr. Akan has also attended many international conferences to present her studies.

Natalie Austin *McMaster University* (*Canada*) • Natalie Austin manages the public relations associated with a Parks Canada construction portfolio valued at almost $1 billion. She spent time working in the printing industry with Transcontinental, and has been a Public Relations Strategist at Parks Canada since 2007, working in the areas of watershed management, asset management, and environmental conservation. Natalie is a founder and co-owner of Blackdog Properties, a property management and investment business based in Peterborough, Ontario. In 2018, Natalie attained a Master of Communication Management from McMaster University, with a special focus on crisis and disaster communication.

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Pauline Berry *McMaster University* (*Canada*) • Pauline Berry is a newly minted graduate student from McMaster-Syracuse University, recently obtaining her Masters in Communication Management. She is an experienced marketer with a passion for storytelling and content creation and currently works for KPMG Canada in the Toronto office. She and her fellow classmates were recently published in the January 2020 issue of the McMaster Journal of Communications exploring electronic word-of-mouth marketing and its impact on sales on Amazon. She looks forward to sharing her research on the impact of algorithms on reputation management at her first BledCom this summer. Au

Banu Bıçakçı *İzmir University of Economics* (*Turkey*) • A. Banu Bıçakçı (PhD) is an Associate Professor of Public Relations. Currently she is a part-time lecturer at İzmir University of Economics and a Communication Consultant for the Association of Organic Agriculture Associations (ETO Derneği). She has published international articles and book chapters, particularly on Turkish PR history, sustainability and CSR. She is a member of EUPRERA, ECREA and IAMCR. She has been conducting research in EUPRERA PR History network for seven years; she has also been acting as a reviewer for the special PR history issues of Public Relations Review and The Journal of PR Research.

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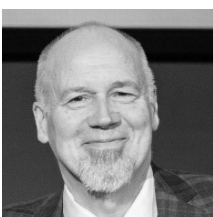
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Katja Fašink *ELES (Slovenia)* • Katja Fašink has been the Head of Corporate Communications at ELES Group since 2017. Last year, the ELES system Operator was awarded for becoming the first Slovenian finalist at the CHARGE Awards - World's Best Energy Brand presented in September 2019 in Iceland. Rewards were also handed out from the Poslovna Akademija Finance for Annual Reports 2017 and 2018 for the Best Annual Report among large Companies and for the best Annual Report in Risk Management and Corporate Governance. Within the frameworks of the communication strategy for ELES she follows international trends, while proving to the "local media folklore" her successful management of the department with only 0.3 to 0.5 % annual unfavourable media coverage. Before entering the energy sector she worked as managing Director for EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) in the Hunter&Bard agency. Currently, she is developing a Rubber Bullet theory concerning women leadership in public relations. The abstract submitted to BledCom under the supervision of Dejan Verčič (University of Ljubljana) and Alenka Jelen Sanchez (University of Stirling) reveals structural inequality that impacts the professional field of public relations. The Rubber Bullet theory

assumes that female public relations leaders find themselves in a position of targets and/or shields of modernized patriarchal domination. The Rubber Bullet theory importantly challenges progressive premises of female career trajectories, explores the dynamics of power inequality and deterioration of women in leadership and explains the reproduction of the patriarchal gender relations.

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3 AUTHORS

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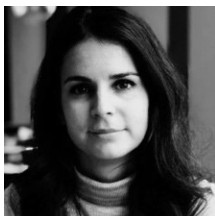
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3 AUTHORS

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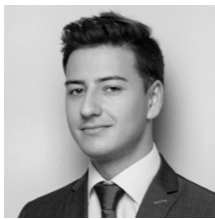
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Examining national identity building from a semantic network analysis perspective: the cognitive structure of Kemalist journal Ülkü

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Introduction and purpose

This study focuses on Ülkü, the official journal of the People's Houses, which was designed to create an ideology for the modern Turkish state as opposed to Ottomanism. It is aimed to examine the cognitive structure of Ülkü version of Kemalist modernism through a semantic network analysis.

Literature review

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War in 1918 was a traumatic experience for both the elite and society. National Independence War (1919-1922) successfully led by the western educated middle class intellectuals and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey as a modern state in 1923 marked the beginning of a new era.

The 1920s and 1930s were crucial in the consolidation of the nation state in the new republic. The republican elite sought to implement a series of reforms to modernise or westernise Turkey. These reforms crucially involved modernisation of the populations in order to shape a new type of citizen: a republican citizen loyal to the republic's secular western values. However, top-down modernisation project of the elite challenged by a largely conservative peasant society (Tunçay, 2010: 49-55).

The republican elite then launched an ambitious project of establishing the People's Houses across Turkey, even in the remotest corners of the country, to spread the secular, western ideas among the population. The People's Houses were opened in fourteen cities in 1932, by 1950 the number of houses reached to 478 (Çeçen, 1990: 10-20).

75 periodicals were published by these People's Houses. Ülkü was published by Ankara People's House, the capital city of Turkey. Ülkü demonstrates an exceptional effort on the part of the elite to create a modern-western identity. It was printed between 1933 and 1950, for 17 years, 272 issues in total. The founding father of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk himself named the Journal Ülkü, meaning *Ideal*. The journal assumed the task of educating the masses based on western ideas, habits and tastes.

The quest for how communication can serve for

national identity and unity has been an ongoing research emphasis in political science. However, the function of communication is highlighted as only a channel or network. Public relations offers a vast potential since it offers "an elaborate model communication that focuses on how meanings are socially constructed" (Taylor and Kent, 2006 :303). Accordingly, the assumption that people are ignorant and need to be educated is an one way approach (Toledano and McKie, 2013) against public relations engagement perspective.

Methodology

This study employs semantic network analysis; it uses network analytic techniques - with words of written text as vertices - for revealing cognitive structure of Ülkü. The period from February 1933 to August 1936 is selected for data analysis as "Ülkü elite, is dominant during this particular period" (Aydın, 2004: 64). The unit of analysis is editorial in each Pajek, the program for analysis and visualization of networks is utilized for data analysis.

Findings

The results are not yet complete as the analysis is in progress. The researchers made no changes to the text of editorials but only deleted function words such as determiners and conjunctions from dataset. At the end, the most salient associations will be identified by calculating the importance of each vertex (word) within graph via centrality measures.

Implications

Unveiling collective structure of Ülkü from a network perspective can have important consequences for public relations literature in terms of building national identity.

The study will also demonstrate the utility and contribution of semantic network analysis for understanding the structure of Ülkü, as a vehicle for replacing the traditional even 'archaic' Ottoman-Muslim identity with the new modern-western identity. The initial findings of qualitative research have demonstrated embedded ideological meanings related to the modern national identity (i.e., Aydin, 2004), this study will further the understanding by revealing latent meaning in the text. Accordingly, the findings will provide insights regarding identity building communication practices which might be also valid in other cultural contexts.

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Social media use during the 2016 Fort McMurray, Canada Wildfires: An exploration of the role of sense of community

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Purpose

This study examines social media use during the 2016 Fort McMurray wildfires disaster in Alberta, Canada, through the lens of McMillan and Chavis's 1986 sense of community framework. Specifically, it asks and answers questions like: Why does an individual located geographically distant from a disaster area, choose to demonstrate support through social media? Do these individuals feel close in some way to the more proximate disaster victims? For individuals more proximate to the disaster, does creating, sustaining, or enhancing a sense of community act as a motivator to participate in the use of social media? Finally, the study asks if the characteristics that represent a sense of community are a consideration for disaster communicators using social media on behalf of organizations.

Literature Review

The review of literature shows a large body of research regarding crisis communication and social media use that focuses on form, source, the crafting of the social media message, and the public's acceptance of that message. While there are common threads in organizational crisis communication and disaster communication, the differences are enough to warrant separate and distinct study of each concept. Within the dis- tinct body of research focused on disaster communication, there is currently an underdeveloped exploration of the reasons that individuals use social media during disaster situations, with conflicting results. Social media has been lauded for its ability to coalesce information and create connection over distances; indeed the body of research suggests that information seeking is a strong motivator for social media use in disaster situations. Yet the body of research shows mixed negative and positive psychological results of its use in disasters. There is no known study that directly applies McMillan and Chavis's 1986 sense of community framework to the use of social media in disaster situations.

Methodology

This study used a multi-method design to acquire both qualitative and quantitative data. Two populations of individuals who had utilized social media about and during the Fort McMurray fires completed an 18 question online survey: those residing within Fort McMurray (n=137), and those residing in other parts of Canada outside of Fort McMurray (n=101). In addition, disaster communicators associated with the Fort McMurray fires were interviewed (n=6) via phone by the researcher. All research was conducted within a three-week period.

Results and Conclusions

The study found that, though sense of community was not a specifically stated consideration in disaster communication planning, these dynamics played a role in the both the public's and communicators' use of social media during the Fort McMurray wildfire disaster. Further, a sense of community was a motivating factor in sustained social media connection for individuals after the disaster was over. Geographic proximity to the disaster was found to mediate an individual's desire to be connected with others via social media during a disaster, even though populations across Canada seemed to experience the wildfire disaster in similar ways.

Limitations

A research study of this size and nature does not allow for other research methods, which may have been helpful in uncovering underlying motivations within a new and complicated framework. Further, surveys and interviews were conducted one year following the 2016 Fort McMurray fires. It is unclear how much individuals are able to understand, remember, or express about their underlying motivations.

Practical and Social Implications

Social media remains a tool for connection. This research strongly points to a shared experience being the number one driver for individuals to feel a sense of community, and that the feelings of a shared online experience can re-enforce feelings of a sense of community. While disaster communicators do not currently plan their communication activities or messaging around enabling a sense of community in audiences, they are utilizing social media in ways that include some components of sense of community. This study answers the call for more research into social media use during disaster, and has implications for emergency planning within Canadian municipalities. Disaster communicators have a responsibility to include sense of community tenets in their disaster planning, and have a viable tool in social media with which to fulfill this.

Keywords: *Disaster communication, Fort McMurray fires, Sense of community, Social media*

The scoring economy: Reputation management in the age of algorithms

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Introduction and purpose of the study

We live in an algorithmic age, an age where algorithms influence our smallest, most miniscule choices to our largest, most life-defining decisions. By surveilling and recording our online activity, algorithms are able to "construct a rich portrait of a digital identity that we cannot control" (Beck, 2015, p. 127). Myriad authors, researchers, and professionals dedicate their research to exposing the reality behind the biased, and subjective nature of these algorithms.The proliferation of algorithms and mounting public concern present challenges for not only individuals, but also organizations. In fact, algorithms have rapidly become commonplace in stakeholder interactions. Thus, communication practitioners will increasingly be tasked with "managing reputational [and trust] concerns [created by] algorithms" (Buhmann, 2019, para. 4).The purpose of this study is to understand how and to what extent algorithms are impacting corporate reputation management. Simply, this study explores how algorithms, like search engine and automated journalism algorithms, are changing how organizations build and maintain their reputations - both on and offline.

Literature review

This research is quite novel in that it attempts to marry two fields that have yet to be united; notably, algorithms and reputation management. Current research explores these topics independent of one another. Existing research incorporating both of these spheres together is dismal; thus, this study intends expand current research by highlighting the impact algorithms have on organizational reputation management in hopes that it helps organizations better understand how to build and maintain their reputations - on and offline.

Methodology

To understand how algorithms impact organizational reputation, this study explores three main research questions. The first research question (RQ1) is concerned with how search engine algorithms impact customer trust and perception of an organization. The data collection method that will be used for this research question is an online survey deployed through Amazon's MTurk with a sample size of at least 100 participants. The second research question explores how and to what extent search engine algorithms impact how organizations build trust with their stakeholders and manage their reputation. The data collection method used for this research question involved telephone interviews with ten Canadian senior communications professionals. The final research question explores how and to what extent automated journalism impacts customer trust and perceived credibility of organizations. The data collection method that was used for this research question was an online experiment deployed on Amazon's MTurk with a sample size of 100 participants.

Results and conclusions

Given this paper is still in progress, the results are still to be determined. However, some limitations do exist. A clear limitation of this study is its small sample size, mainly due to the researcher's limited time and financial resources – the sample is not representative of the Canadian communications industry and should only be referenced within the study's parameters. Secondly, the researcher used the platform, Amazon MTurk, for data collection – namely in the online experiment and online survey data collection methodologies; the limitation of this platform is that there is no way to be sure the participants were honest in their responses, as they were compensated for their participation. This limitation could skew the accuracy and replicability results. Thirdly, participants in the telephone surveys could have exaggerated or provided inaccurate responses to the questions posed, creating a potential limitation. Fourthly, the literature assessed was limited to the researcher's knowledge on the topic and access to information – potentially limiting the breath of literature included. Future studies in this field of research are encouraged to expand the scope of the study to more of a global scale to understand whether similar experiences exist in other jurisdictions outside of Canada. Another direction of study could focus on a specific organization to understand how various algorithms, like search, impact the organization's reputation over time.

Practical and social implications

The practical and social implications of this study are both educational and directional for both communications practitioners and society in general. The results of this research have the potential to alter the practice of reputation management altogether. The practical intent of this study is to provide communicators with a guide of how to mitigate and manage reputational issues that might arise from our new scoring economy.

Keywords: *reputation management*; *search engine algorithms*; *automated journalism*; *algorithmic transparency*

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Inter-organizational Relationship Elaboration Function of PR to Foster CSOs Online Participation and co-creation in Advocacy Networks: 'No Pesticides on my Plate' campaign

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have distinctive goals, motivations, organizational cultures, activism levels, professional communication abilities and capacities; even they are acting in the same field. When they become members of an advocacy network, all those variations may lead to discrepant communicative behavior. Thus, encouraging member organizations to collaborate and co-create messages towards an advocacy goal is a major challenge in PR. CSOs as members of an advocacy network are neither external, nor internal publics and yet, they are both. This exclusive status is an opportunity and threat from the PR perspective; when considered thoroughly, it might help inter-organizational relationship elaboration function of PR. Bearing this in mind, relationship management approach provides a useful framework to study the quality of relationship within an advocacy network.

Social media instruments have become an integral part of the advocacy strategies of CSOs and many of them utilize these platforms to mobilize their audience and involve them to support their work, change a behavior, take part in activism, or increase awareness of an issue. So, this research takes social media outcomes of the network members into consideration, as well.

The main purpose of this study is to examine the quality of relationship between a leading CSO and network member CSOs as a potential indicator of members' online communication performances. The study reviews an EU funded campaign, led by Buğday Association and named 'No pesticides on my plate'. Accordingly, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1. What are the PR tactics employed by Buğday to encourage the member CSOs to support campaign objectives?

RQ 2. What is the quality of the relationship between Buğday and the member CSOs?

RQ 3. Do the member CSOs have the necessary technical capacity and human resources to manage their social media accounts?

RQ 4. Are the member CSOs participating the communication process and co-creating the campaign messages in the social media?

Consequently the following hypothesis is constructed:

H1: The quality of relationship between the leading CSO and the member CSOs in an advocacy network will predict the frequency of the members' relevant social media messages.

Literature review

Civil society is an important social location for PR (Moloney, 2006). According to Taylor and Kent (2017, p.18) public relations as an inter-organizational relationship building function, can help organizations coordinate action, reduce uncertainty, build trust and sustain networks of organizations in civil society.

Among the theories such as Resource Dependency, Social Network, Collective Action and Community Ecology, Sommerfeldt and Kent (2015) asserted that Relationship Management Theory is beneficial in understanding the quality of relationships in a network.

"Communicative driven relationships with publics in NGOs can be studied from both relational processes and outcomes […], outcomes in terms of the communication goals of these relationships" (Oliveira, 2017 p.117). CSOs develop their presence in social media platforms and advance their advocacy strategy. These platforms are used to set the agenda according to CSOs interests and objectives (Duberry, 2019)

Methodology

The research depends on case study method; the chosen campaign is 'No pesticides on my plate' of an advocacy network, composed of a leading CSO, 'Buğday Association' and 100 member CSOs including cooperatives, food communities, associations, ecology networks, collectives, platforms and chambers. Their goal is to contribute to increasing food safety, health and protection of environment in Turkey through decreasing the use of pesticides. These organizations form the population of this study.

Considering the first research question, the study relies on data collected through interviews with the campaign's senior communication practitioner via telephone and e-mail. The information is backed with textual analysis of secondary sources.

The quality of relationship between Buğday and the member CSOs is measured by a survey sent to the CSOs. It is based on a scale adapted by Sommerfeldt and Kent (2015). Control mutuality, trust, commitment and satisfaction are the items measured on a 5 point Likert scale, as indicators of relationship quality. The survey also includes descriptive items in order to depict the social media usage of the CSOs, which was the third research question. The descriptive data enabled us to identify the active and constantly updated accounts. These accounts are the subjects for the following question, for which content analysis method is employed. The contents of the member CSOs' pre-determined social media accounts are scanned between December 2019-April 2020, and the frequency of relevant posts is detected quantitatively. Subsequently, the hypothesis is tested statistically.

Limitations

The results of this research are limited with the data gathered from a limited number of CSOs. Because of the comparatively small size of population and thus, survey data, the results are not generalizable. Another limitation is associated with the content analysis of social media accounts, whereas the posts on only two mostly preferred sites were taken into consideration and the temporary 'stories' are excluded from the analysis, because of the technical inconvenience.

Practical and social implications

This study contributes to our understanding of the role and significance of PR in civil society.

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Using Public Relations to drive fundraising success: A case study on relationship building in not-for-profits

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Introduction

This research aims to discover if the principles of public relations, through the work of Hon and Grunig's, *Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations* (1999), could be applied to the not-for-profit sector. And if so, could their measurement formula (1999) be used to build a scoring system that predicts an individual's likelihood of giving to a charity, using statistical analysis through a case study.

Literature Review

In Hon and Grunig's (1999) research, they looked at control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, communal relationship, as markers for an organization's relationship within different audience types. They concluded that "when perceptions of relationships are measured from both sides, one can begin to measure gaps in the way management and publics perceive the relationship" (p. 5). This model seems comparable to the work that is done in the fundraising sector, and furthers the importance of relationship.

Kelly (2001) explains, that in order for fundraising to be successful, it should be redefined as a specialization of public relations, as it manages communication between the organization and donors. Heath (2001) went on to discuss the elements of fostering a relationship, that is

a part of an organization's strategy, which are reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing, which were also discussed in Hon and Grunig's (1999) work as symmetrical strategies that could be used to foster growth within an organization.

Methodology

For this study, a not-for-profit in Canada was selected, as it is in a system that is facing a significant challenges and changes in the sector, similar to that of many other not-for-profits. It operates with a database, similar to others, that allows fundraisers to keep records those they have relationship with. From this database, a random segment of individuals was chosen, with a total number of 5470 individuals being emailed a survey, following the design established by Hon and Grunig (1999). The results were then used to guide a score for an individual's likelihood to give, based on their responses using a Likert scale, and applying a T-test.

Results and Conclusions

This research showed that the Hon and Grunig (1999) principles could be applied to understanding the donor relationship that donors. Those who knew more about the not-for-profit organization do not necessarily feel connected, but when the scales of Hon and Grunig (1999) are applied with a T-test, the impact that com-

munications can have on their willingness to donate was discovered.

For example, similar to Hon and Grunig (1999), respondents answered questions related to control mutuality. Based on the Likert scale, the mean response for those that said yes or no for the potential of future giving in the next twelve months showed a statistical difference in their response. This would indicate that those who said they will potentially give in the next 12 months, were more likely at a 95% significance level to give a higher rating to the statements of control mutuality than those who did not intend to give. An important consideration for public relations professionals in the sector, working to build relationships of trust with their donors.

The responses were gathered with no identifying factors for respondents, meaning that the responses could not be returned to the database for an individual, for retesting at future intervals. This impacts the ability to use these scores as a marker for program success over time, but in future, research could be adjusted to allow for identifiers, to mark how communications campaigns change responses. This would be a significant opportunity for future research, and would be beneficial for public relations moving forward.

Practical Implications

This research provides a basis of understanding for the value that the Hon and Grunig (1999), offer beyond public relations. The principles of their work (1999) study can be applied to fundraising and can provide insight for understanding alumni and their relationship with charities and not-for-profits around the world. Moving forward, organizations should adjust their organizational structure to allow for public relations professionals to become relationship managers, while applying principles for improving relationship and connection with donors.

Keywords: *Not-for-Profit, Fundraising, Relationship measurement, Case study, Stewardship*

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What difference does it make? A study of UK initiatives designed to improve representation of women at senior levels in public relations

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Introduction and purpose

The last five years has seen many professional associations, public relations leaders, industry magazines, blogs and websites highlight the gender gap in public relations and actively campaign to ensure that women better represented in the workplace at senior level through a variety of initiatives and thought leadership.

In 2015 I carried out a review which explored *why* women resigned from senior roles in the public relations industry. Prior to this study there had been numerous attempts to explain the reason for women's under-representation in senior public relations roles but little attention had been given to the factors which caused women to abandon a career.

The 2015 study found that the overriding reasons for women leaving public relations were because they felt excluded from 'meaningful' public relations work as childcare restrictions meant that they were not considered (or felt unable to take up) the 'exciting' projects. Interviewees believed that they were pushed, rather than pulled, into leaving public relations due to being side-lined into non-career roles, passed over for promotion due to their gender, or felt that they were unable to take part in a full range of occupational activities, thus removing them from relevant and career-enhancing power networks.

The last five years have seen an appetite among UK public relations leaders to reduce the gender gap in public relations and my 2020 study reviews and categorises the many initiatives from the past five years in the UK and reviews their potential impact.

Literature review

Globally, women outnumber men in junior and middle management public relations roles across most of the western world – but are in the minority in senior management.

The focus of writing on gender is shifting to a more mixed approach which sees oppression of women due to gender as inseparable from discussions around class, sexual orientation, disability, race, and age.

Women outnumber men in junior and mid-level public relations roles across most of the world - for instance in the UK (e.g. Chartered Institute of Public Relations , 2019; the USA (e.g. Aldoory & Toth, 2002; Sha, Tindall and Dozier, 2010), Germany (e.g. Fröhlich & Peters, 2007) and Russia (e.g. Tsetsura, 2012). However, in senior positions (above the role of account director/head of communications), women are in

the minority in public relations roles.

Methodology

A literature review which explored UK-based initiatives which were published by the following:

- Blogs featured in Vuelio's 'top 20' PR bloggers list

- PR magazines

- leading PR websites

- PR professional associations

Results and conclusions

This study suggests that while a drive to improve the representation of women at senior levels in public relations has remained a strong focus in the public relations industry over the past five years, none have suggested that structural or societal change is needed. Principally the studies have focused on the following areas:

Promotion of flexible working

Promotion of homeworking

Awareness-raising campaigns

Calls for salary transparency

Valorising successful women

This study observes that despite the visibility of these initiatives, industry surveys such as the CIPR's *State of the Profession* report (2019) suggest that the situation is becoming worse for women, not better. There are now increased gender discrepancies at senior levels in public relations and the occupation is becoming less diverse in terms of class, age, disability, and race.

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Social Media, are the lines between professional and personal use blurring?

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Introduction and purpose of the study

A key aspect of understanding communications in a global environment is understanding social media usage. With the recent dramatic increase in social media usage of the past decade, the incorporation of social media and online platforms into communication strategies of organizations has been intensively discussed and researched. This study investigates social media usage across the different countries at a global steelmaker to understand how it is being used for business purposes. Are personal and professional lines blurring with social media use?

Literature review

With the increased use of social media in the workplace, our professional and personal lives are increasingly becoming intertwined. The literature suggests that social media interaction and managing the boundaries is more difficult online than offline. Social media is where the lines are blurred between our professional and private lives. It is where we share our music, movies, pictures, purchases, politics and morning lattes on display for the entire world to see.

In the article "Blurred Boundaries: Social Media privacy and the Twenty-First century employee" this dilemma is examined. Even though social media has become pervasive in the lives of employees, their use in the workplace remains legally ungoverned and unsettled. Employees bring to the shared workplace diverse and often paradoxical attitudes toward social media.

In the Arthur W. Page Society Report, The CEO View: The Impact of Communications on Corporate Character in a 24x7 Digital World the Social Media is now mature. CEO's no longer perceive Twitter, the blogosphere or any other social media as emerging technologies, as experimental or as anything less than full-fledged communications channels that must be monitored, measured and interpreted in the same manner as the traditional ones (Page Society, 2013).

Leading in the Age of Super-Transparency, Austin states that thanks to social media and an increasing flood of data, the capacity to generate causes and controversies almost instantly has become the new norm in today's "super-transparent society. "Most business leaders have not yet come to grips with the new reality — and what it means for their organizations (Austin, 2016).

Methodology

A population of 19 professionals was interviewed from 7 different countries working at different hierarchical levels in Communication and in other areas such as IT, Human Resources, Legal, and Marketing. Content Analysis, a quantitative method of research was also used as a tool to gain further insights into each of the questions.

Results and Conclusions

Both the interview research and content analysis demonstrate that personal and professional boundaries are blurring and that policy guidelines are important.

While this report offers some insight into communication strategies in a global company and how social media tools are used, it also serves as an incentive to begin more research in this area. Expanding on this research from participants in the global manufacturing sector and broadening the scope of a traditional commodity industry, could lead to more conclusions on effective global communications.

Practical and Social implications

We can acknowledge there can be no escaping the rise of the use of social media tools in successful global communications and business interactions. Most social media platforms are not even 10 years old, but they are fundamentally woven into the fabric of everyday communications across the globe. These changes in communication are unprecedented. The established more senior executive must come to terms with communication channels that are culturally diverse, fast paced and abundant. In the past business relationships for the most part were face-to-face, today they exist virtually on an incredibly diverse number of platforms. This fundamental shift in human behavior has taken place at such a speed that are human resource policies and legal framework is left still catching up. What started as social digital platforms in our personal lives, are now business tools with significant ramifications if used incorrectly, both personally and professionally. The 2016 World Economic Report outlook and call to action states that after a "wild childhood", it is now time for digital media's "coming of age". Industry, the public sector, and the individual must assume responsibility for fostering the opportunities offered by digital media, while helping to mitigate the negative effects on individuals, organizations and society.

Keywords: *social media, digital, global, communication professional, strategy,*

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Bringing back joy to leftover women. The Impact of SK-II Marriage Market Takeover Campaign on the perception of women in China and PR practice.

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Introduction and purpose of the study

In China, single women over the age of 25 often face huge pressure to get married. They have endured being called "剩女 sheng nu (leftover women)' by families, media and the society. In popular discourse, women of that age are often described as selfish, picky, and favour of rich men (Ji, 2015). In 2016, a Procter & Gamble-owned Japanese skincare brand SK-II launched a video-based PR campaign called 'Marriage Market Takeover' (MMT) and stepped forward trying to change the way the unmarried women are seen by the society and break the negative stigma. The campaign led to doubling the SKII sales YoY, which have contributed to making 2016 the most successful year in the brand's history in China (Troedsson, 2017). Despite its marketing recognition, the contribution of the campaign to the enhancement of societal dialogue has never been explored in full.

Literature Review

Following argument presented Ihlen and Verhoeven (2012), as well as Edwards (2012, 2018), understanding Public Relations role 'in', and contribution 'to' the society seems one of the discipline's critical aims. Yet, for some PR scholars, any of brands' promotional activities tackling social issues (e.g. migration crisis, women empowerment, LGBTQR awareness) can only be classified as Marketing Public Relations (MPR, Harris, 1993), IMC (e.g. Schultz, 2003) or brand activism (du Toit 2017; Sarkar and Kotler, 2018), and thus discredited as not fitting into the framework of 'pure' PR. Although several related concepts tackle the intercept of PR and society (e.g. social marketing, social advertising, or CSR) none of them seems to clearly identify what are the obligations of promotional PR to society.

With the ostensible discrepancy between calls for understanding PR's role in the society and reluctance to acknowledge promotional PR contributions to the development of socially sustainable marketing communication, it appeared interesting to examine SKII campaign's impact on the perception of women in China and PR practice.

Aims

Firstly, the project aimed at understanding to what extent the SKII campaign has changed the perception of women over the age 25 in China.

The second goal was to explore the impact of the SK-II MMT campaign on communication

industry practice. In particular, it focused on PR, marketing and communication professionals' perception and evaluation of the campaign.

Methodology

Two studies were conducted to answer research questions of the project.

In study 1, 1127 posts from Chinese biggest social communication media platform 'Sina Weibo' including comments on leftover women were analysed. Mixed-method approach was adopted. Qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis followed by pair-wise t-test analyses were employed.

In Study 2, twelve professionals recruited from academia and communication industry in China were asked about the perception, feelings and potential impact of the campaign on the communication industry using in-depth semi-structured interviews.

Results

The findings of Study 1 showed that the negative (DV1) and neutral discourse (DV2) about leftover women changed after the SK-II Marriage Market Takeover campaign. Compared to 2016, negative perception of others toward 'leftover women' decreased from 23% to 10% while negative self-perception decreased from 42% to 30%. On the other hand, neutral self-perception increased significantly from 2.9% to 29.8%.

Results of the Study 2 revealed that SK-II campaign influenced communication professionals to emulate it through using similar communication approaches, as well as to recognise the value of education as one of promotional strategies. At the same time, most of the participants also indicated that the campaign was a result of actual changes in the social environment.

Conclusion

By revealing the conflict between modern and traditional value, the SK-II Marriage Market Takeover campaign has illustrated the connections and tensions between society, in this context, the public relations profession could be regarded as social agents (Edwards & Hodges, 2011). Finding also echo with the work of Molleda (2001, Molleda and Moreno, 2006; Molleda et al., 2003), and Sriramesh (Sriramesh, 1992, 1999, 2002; Sriramesh and Vercic, 1995), who have argued that the cultural context of society will influence the ways in which PR practitioners carry out their tasks (Edward, 2012).

The study is not free from limitations. It cannot be directly determined whether the observed changes in the discourse about women over the age of 25 can be attributed solely to the SKII PR campaign as a number of influential global social movements (e.g. #MeToo) has contributed to increasing awareness of issues connected to women portrayal and perception, as well weakening the impact of traditional women gender stereotypes on people's attitudes.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth Marketing on Amazon: Exploring how and to what extent Amazon reviews affect sales

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Abstract

Consumers today base many of their decisions on peer referrals and online reviews. With the omnipresence of social media and online reviews, electronic word-of-mouth marketing (eWOM) has become a priority for many companies for both business growth and reputational management. This research project examines the growth of two start-ups, Kickstarter A and Kickstarter B, who sell their products, Product A and Product B, on Amazon. Product A is a children's science craft kit and Product B is a reflective vest for athletes. Company identities and product information have been stripped from this research to maintain business confidentiality. The objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of eWOM and its impact on sales. This study also seeks to help organizational leaders understand the significance of eWOM and its role in effective consumer and stakeholder relations, and in overall brand management. This research study focuses on two areas, the effectiveness of Amazon reviews and the value of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) marketing on sales. The objective of the research is to discern the following hypothesis: A company that sells its products on Amazon and primarily relies on word-of-mouth. The researchers of this project explored eWOM by examining Amazon reviews from two different Kickstarter companies to determine which elements of online reviews impact product sales. By overlaying Amazon review data and sales figures from each Kickstarter company, researchers were able to determine the review factors that companies should focus on to increase their sales and grow their brands.

Some of the limitations encountered throughout the study included the limited amount of reviews for Product A and Product B. The reviews that the researchers extracted did not capture the entire universe of Kickstarter companies, making the research sample limited in scope. Secondly, the researchers only analyzed two retailers, Kickstarter A and Kickstarter B; thus, the findings could be a coincidence as there are many other potential factors that the researchers might not have explored due to limited time and scope of the study. Lastly, the researchers of this study were only able to obtain the first 20 months of sales data from Kickstarter A and Kickstarter B. For a deeper analysis, the researchers recommend that future studies include more financial data. With a more robust financial data set, researchers will be able to establish concrete trends and correlations. The consideration for potential bias should be considered when reviewing this study. Additionally, bias may surface within the study if the researchers did not present enough

contrary evidence. This can lead to confirmation bias where researchers use filtered information to justify their hypotheses. A lack of contrary evidence and diverse perspectives can limit a holistic viewpoint and increase the bias in the findings. The practical implications of this study's results show that products with a high volume of positive reviews made by verified purchasers positively correlate to product sales; ultimately, this study helps organizations manage their reputation (and sales) better online.

Keywords: *electronic word-of-mouth marketing, Amazon, online reviews, Kickstarter, sales, reputational management, brand reputation, online reputation management*

Adaptation and reliability and validity of game immersion scale in Turkish

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The developments in communication technologies lead to human computer interaction. The researchers focus on two main streams, persuasive technologies and gamification in public relations and marketing communications. Although the terminal goal of the both is the same, behavioral change, their approach is different. In this study, gamification, one of the popular research areas in persuasion research, is studied. Although gamification practices are widely used in mobile application and web page designs, literature lacks measuring gameful experience. Game immersion scale is developed for measuring users game experience (Jennett et al., 2008). Game immersion is measured by the Turkish researchers, however there is no available Turkish version of game immersion scale, which is the justification of this study, Thus, the aim of the study is to adapt game immersion scale into Turkish and test for validity and reliability within Turkish context.

Literature review

Gamification refers to the use of game mechanics in non-game contexts. It has become popular over the past decade due to the potential to convince people, motivate them for action and trigger desired behaviors. Researchers focused on measuring game experience developed valid and reliable scale to measure the gaming experience (Brockmyer et al., 2009; Eppmann, Bekk, & Klein, 2018; Högberg, Hamari, & Wästlund,

2019; Jennett et al., 2008). Available scales for measuring game experience are game flow scale, game immersion scale, GAMEX (Gameful Experience Scale), GAMEFULQUEST (Gameful Experience Questionnaire). Immersion in gameful experience is the common dimension in most of the scales.

Methodology

The purpose of the study is to test adapted Turkish version of game immersion scale for reliability and validity. An online data collection setting is used where participants are first shown a gamified marketing application video. A total of 415 participants participated in the study, remaining 402 usable questionnaires after missing values. Invitations are sent to the participants through emails and social media accounts, thus convenience sampling method is used. The data collection tool consists of demographics and Turkish version of the game immersion scale. The structural equation modeling approach is operationalized with AMOS v24. Proposed game immersion scale factor structure is tested with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Composite (or Construct) Reliability (CR) value is calculated for reliability measure, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is calculated for convergent validity measure, and Fornell and Larcker (1981) discriminant criteria is operationalized for discriminant validity. A new method for assessing discriminant validity in partial least squares structural equation modeling the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) is

also calculated as AVE is a strict criterion for discriminant validity.

Results and conclusions

The original game immersion scale is composed of three dimension and 7 sub dimensions. The current study test game immersion scale in Turkish culture context. Results suggests that Turkish version of game immersion scale is reliable and valid. However, Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria violations are evident, and HTMT values suggest discriminant validity is ensured at the minimum acceptable cutoff values. Further analysis and recommendations is suggested in the study.

Practical and social implications

Gamification is widely used in mobile applications and web pages for education, business management, marketing, employee education and motivation, sustainability, health, public relations etc. In this study, Turkish version of game immersion scale is tested for validity and reliability and offered for Turkish researchers' use.

Keywords: *Game Immersion, Validity, Reliability, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, HTMT.*

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Exploring the cumulative 25-year impact of BledCom as a network of influence and action

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Background

BledCom is an institution that re-creates and regenerates itself every year. It has constantly evolved (and revolved) around a common core of relationships centred on BledCom's founding group who continue to organise it. BledCom is a very strong node of productive influence within the strongly inter-connected network of academic public relations. Over more than two decades, it has enabled a great many academics and practitioners to meet, share their work and to collaborate on new productive ventures. It is this third aspect, collaboration and the creation and realisation of new opportunities, that interests me.

My own very minor experience serves as an illustration. In 2011, I was invited to take part in BledCom for the first time. I was struck by both the breadth and quality of discussion and by the richness of the contacts I was able to make, to the extent of returning several times as a delegate during the years since then. The insights gained and the connections made stay in the memory and I continue to value them.

Three instances underline the collaborative power of BledCom. The first of these was that in Bled in 2011 I met my proposed project partner, Lavinia Cinca, who was looking to create a communication association in Romania. That BledCom meeting led to a sustained period of dialogue, with subsequent meetings in London, Coventry, Brussels and at Bledcom again in 2012. FEIEA's help was forthcoming and an internal communication seminar duly took place in Bucharest. Lavinia and I began a further commercial collaboration in 2016 connected with the European robotics agency, euRobotics. That collaboration has continued in each subsequent year and will continue in 2020.

The second instance was that I met Caron Jones, head of a Public Relations Masters programme at the UK University of Greenwich. As a direct consequence of this encounter, Caron invited me to bring my practitioner's perspective to the PR MA programme and I was therefore able to develop my teaching interests as a guest lecturer over several subsequent years.

The third instance is that I met Kevin Ruck, of whom I had known but never met before BledCom 2011. Through informal discussions at BledCom, we discovered several shared perspectives on the development of internal communication as an emerging professional practice. This resulted in small-scale collaborative activities between our two respective professional organisations, CIPR and IoIC.

These are personal, modest and perhaps even banal examples of how connections made at Bled-

Com can be fruitful. Nonetheless, they illustrate how four individual BledCom 2011 participants were able to realise opportunities that may not otherwise have arisen without the beneficial influence of an institution that manifests itself early each summer on the shores of Lake Bled.

Our premise is that over 20 years, BledCom will have generated a wide, diverse and numerous range of productive collaborations leading to the creation of research projects and papers, articles, books and events, work opportunities, the formation of new teams, and no doubt the spawning of countless other social relationships. Therefore, capturing, recording and presenting the totality of these many and various 'products' of BledCom will provide a qualitative and detailed measure of the impact of BledCom over 20 years, seen through the lens of BledCom's collaborative power.

With the consent of the BledCom organisers and as a personal contribution to an institution we hold in very high regard, Lavinia and I propose to research and construct a network map of influence to examine and establish the power, extent and productivity of what I choose to call BledCombinations. The BledCom organisers will be familiar with BledCombinations, following a previous 'proof of concept' presentation and then a proposal submission for the 2015 BledCom which we were unable to pursue at that time. Circumstances this year are now favourable and we would therefore like to fulfil a commitment we made several years ago by completing our project and presenting our findings at BledCom 2020.

Method

The BledCom organising team has previously made available to us the contact details for past BledCom participants. We would hope to obtain an updated data set from the 2020 organising team, with all due regard to the provisions for data protection of GDPR. Using a standard set of questions, via correspondence and some face-to-face contact where possible, we will ask BledCom participants to describe, enumerate and evaluate the collaborative activities in which they have been involved as a direct or indirect consequence of their personal participation in BledCom. We will examine the resulting data, identify patterns and present the results, drawing on insights where appropriate from pertinent academic theory concerning the formation, activity and power of networks.

Timetable

Subject to the support of the BledCom organisers, the initial research carried out during the weeks to Easter 2020. Findings will be written up and presented both textually and graphically (the intention at this time is to produce a visually rich network map) in time for BledCom 2020 in July.

If, as hoped, the BledCombinations project is well-received and it provides added insights into the contribution that BledCom has made since its inception, the data, report and graphic representations could be further updated following future BledComs. Since the volume of data that may be generated by the research is unknown, future iterations may also be fruitful for as long as it was perceived to retain some explanatory power. However, within the scope of the present project, it is our intention that this year we will finally bring the BledCombinations concept to fruition.

Participants

I would propose to lead the project, supported by Lavinia, with active participation from the BledCom organisers where required to facilitate contact with past and present BledCom participants.

Next steps

We look forward to the decision of the Bled-Com organisers regarding this proposal. Subject to a positive response, we would then develop a more detailed project plan and scope and proceed quickly to the research field phase.

Who are these Envoys—Managing Communications Behind Seven Questions and Answers that Paint a Picture of Capitol Hill's Press SecretariesCongressional Walls!?

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study/Research Question

Most United States citizens and many scholars across the social sciences do not realize each Member of the United States Congress employs at least one individual—loosely termed a "public relations professional"—traditionally referred to as a "press secretary"—increasingly called a "communications director'—who manages external communications about, and thus the image of, that politician.

This paper is about these little-studied communication management professionals. It builds on a presentation at the 2019 BledCom conference titled, "A Most Heroic Effort . . . in a Most Unique Political Climate: Capitol Hill's Press Secretaries' Attempts to Enhance and Protect Reputations of Members of the United States Congress" (Downes 2019). Doing so it addresses the research question: *"What inquiries—and answers to those inquires—have emerged to help us to understand broadly the practices of press secretaries serving Members of the United States Congress?"*

The Literature

Considering the nexus where "communication management," "political communication" and "congressional messages" intersect this paper draws from a wide-ranging literature review. Doing so it discusses why the world "relationship" is often alluded in the literature and describes the "encoder/decoder" partnership so essential to this relationship (Sha 2017); shares what public relations/mass communication theory might tell us about the press secretaries' worlds (Van Ruler 2016); and comments on the influence of online venues that speak to the press secretaries' work in today's social media environment (Tam & Kim 2019; Wright & Hinson 2017). To date only three published studies have used Congress' press secretaries as units of analysis (Downes, 2008; Hess 1991; Cook, 1989).

Methodology

The paper is built on roughly 18 data sets the author collected from surveys of, interviews with, a focus group among, and ethnographic observations of, Congress' press secretaries. The first, in 1997, was gathered through unstructured phone interviews with practicing press secretaries. The most recent, in 2019, via in-person interviews

on Capitol Hill with today's Congressional press secretaries. The result, over 22 years, has been a growing, often seamless, in-depth exploration of the press secretaries' roles, goals and impetuses built by a series of questions refined, then addressed, from progressive data collections.

Results and Conclusions

This paper poses and answers the following seven questions that emerged from the aforementioned data sets:

Who Are the Press Secretaries? provides an overview of the press secretaries' motivations, personality characteristics, and highs and lows of their days. It also discusses similarities and differences Congressional press secretaries have with traditional public relations professionals.

What Do the Press Secretaries Think of their Bosses? reflects on the press secretaries' views toward their "boss"—i.e., the Member of Congress they unconditionally defend, promote, and faithfully serve.

What do the Press Secretaries Do? introduces the multiple tasks press secretaries' perform and the "public relations tools" they use. It describes balls they juggle each day—including those thrown at them from constantly emerging social, political, cultural and economic events nationally and worldwide.

How do Press Secretaries Work with Traditional Media? reminds readers press secretaries work with two types of "reporters." The first, journalists working for traditional media outlets, are discussed.

How Do Press Secretaries work with New Media? addresses how social ("new," "digital," "emerging") media have dramatically changed the press secretaries lives. Doing so it discusses the second type of "reporters"—i.e. nontraditional ones, particularly "citizen journalists."

How Do Press Secretaries Decide Issues on Which to Focus? describes the "Wave Model" explaining how Congress' press secretaries decide which issues (i.e. which "waves")—among several dozen available—on which to focus, and how and where these "waves" develop.

What Power Do the Press Secretaries Have? speaks to the realization, heightened over time, congressional staff members such as press secretaries can acquire significant power—unrecognized by much of the citizenry.

Practical and Social Implications

The paper is prelude to the author's forthcoming book with the working title, *Press Secretary*: *The Story of Capitol Hill's Image Makers*. It revisits a central inquiry posed in both the book and in the aforementioned 2019 Bled Conference paper asking if "the press secretaries' work as unabashed advocates promoting Members of Congress is good for the United States democracy." It responds: "if press secretaries and reporters do their jobs well, messages shared with the citizenry have verity, the nation is well served, and democracy's best outcomes are enhanced." What is unique about this paper's answer to this question is significant commentary on how today's press secretaries respond to tweets and other messages from President Donald Trump—i.e. a world leader whose communication style, oftentimes unorthodox and unprecedented, has the potential each day to impact United States' and global societies.

Keywords: *Congressional communication management, press secretary, global society*

Just plain Public Relations (PR)

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Introduction and purpose of the study

This paper has as its main purpose to defend, upon a theoretical reflection and departing from an empirical exploratory study, that what we do is "just plain PR" and advocate for a broader understanding and defence of the concept. During at least the last 40 years, scholars and practitioners have worked with an understanding of PR practitioners as bridge builders, sometimes for better organizational and societal outcomes, others at the service of not so good or democratic or equatitarian goals. But we seem to forget that there have always been good and bad uses of science and technology, the law has been misused and that there are still some news that are not fake news. What has really impacted the authors is that we seem to have not only thrown out the baby with the bathwater but, moreover, we have kept the untidy bathwater while losing the baby.

As we are now facing an era where the responsibility of striving towards higher levels of enterprises engagement with people, the planet and prosperity - to use the words of the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres (2019), might be seen as the great challenge for the organizations, and especially enterprises, the authors dare to say that the time might have come to get the baby back in the bathtub if we'll manage not only to reshape the way society sees the PR discipline but also how the discipline sees itself.

Literature review

Coombs and Holladay (2007, 2014) entitled their book "It's not just PR - Public Relations in Society" a parody of the most heard phrase concerning the theme of press relations, in American movies, "It's just PR". Even if the main issues discussed are not new and they depart from some articles and ideas developed by White and Mazur (1995), L'Etang (2007) or even Grunig, Hunt, Dozier, Repper, Simões in the early nineties, as well as from the Bled Manifesto (van Ruler and Vercic, 2002) PR practitioners and scholars seem to have always felt the need to explain what they do and, moreover, to offer some kind of definition of PR that has always been in a very unstable balance between a more market oriented or a more society oriented perspective. Between what has been called the dominant paradigm - Grunig's Symmetrical Approach (1992) - and what we may in a lack of a better word call the critical paradigm the last 30 years haven't seemed to be able to offer a coherent identity to PR.

In this paper the expression "just PR" will be taken at its face value, that is, we assume it as meaning exactly what it says. The point being that whenever you call it PR, communication, strategic communications, corporate or institutional communications, issues management, corporate public affairs, governmental communication, public information or even health or developmental communication we are always in a certain sense speaking about a certain kind of

PR area or function (Lesley, 19 ; Cutlip, Center and Broom 19 ; Lee, 2008; Lee et al, 2011; Lerbinger, 2006 ; Broom and Sha 2013; Wilcox, Cameron, Xifra, 2012; Falconi, 2004 ; Wilcox, Cameron, Reber, Shin, 2012; L'Etang, 2008).

Methodology

To recollect the data authors used the answers already offered to two open ended questions that were part of 4 different online surveys that were sent to different organizations and enterprises in the last three years. These answers constitue what one may consider as a convenience sample covering different enterprises, from SMEs to international corporations operating in Portugal, from non for profit organizations or sports federations to public sector institutions.

Content analyses was the method chosen to organise and present the data. Main categories included aspects concerning the relevance of "public relations" strategies, tactics and actions to the overall achievements of the organization both in its institutional, political, and commercial endeavours as well as those aspects that were referred as being practised or felt as needed for a better development of the enterprises under other designations from the area of human resources to public affairs, or from media relations to what has been called "social media managers" or "web developers". Questions about the importance of the practitioners for a better management of conflict, as banners spanning both for the organizations and the society development, or as trust builders were also addressed.

Results and conclusions

It was a common idea in the eighties of the last century that all organizations had the PR function: good, bad or indifferent. Essentially from the theoretical aspects of the reflection this paper acknowledges, it can be said that it seems many of the endeavours taken by PR that wouldn't need any societal doubts of their importance,

interest or need seem to have been forgotten, misunderstood or not taken as relevant especially by those that have accepted the dominant paradigm in PR. In reality they have been called by many designations or names from governmental and public information, health communication, C4D, or more recently public diplomacy. Theoretical the relevance of these areas as belonging to the PR realm, don't seem to have been fully acknowledge except by some few authors as for instance L'Etang (2008), Wilcox, Cameron, and Xifra (2012), Curtin and Graicer (2007), Simões (1992), White and Mazur (1992). Independent of these aspects we might also need to recover some ideas developed by Heath (2001, 2005,2006) that had to do with more political aspects of the function and especially with what has been called the capacity PR seems to give to organizations to have their ideas discussed out there in the market-place of ideas. From an empirical perspective this study is just an exploratory one that tries to understand the complexity of the misunderstandings involving the profession and the ignorance of what the PR function might cover.

The main conclusion is that it's time to forget the american history of PR, the "spin doctor" era, or so many other names that have kept a certain folk PR theory and embrace a more global approach under the idea as Moss, Powell and DeSanto (2010) have put it of "modern PR" or just get reed of the concept and embrace some other one that enables a coherent, unified and is really representative of so many functions developed in as many different kinds of organizations, in the prosecution of a better understanding between organizations, institutions, enterprises and their stakeholders's nets, understood as main and important actors in themselves, and not only in their relationships with organizations.

Practical and social implications

None of these questions are new. We've been struggling with them for the last 40 years, but now we are facing new challenges those that have transformed our communitarian relationships nets in virtual, global, and every day faster ones that go by the name of "www", the internet or social networks, virtual or amplified reality, global trade, or intercultural (a)communication. Never as today questions as incommunication or acommunitation are a reality, and never as today concepts as understanding as negotiation seem to have so much importance not only for organizations and institutions (from local to global enterprises, from local to supra-governmental CSOs, form local public administration offices to UN) but for societal development and peace. The case for a broader definition of the PR concept and the need to make society acknowledge it will be made. Moreover, it will be defended that even though as Public Relations practitioners we can't expect to increase human knowledge, we can and must accomplish our mission: to promote human understanding. That applies only if we truly believe that we only communicate if we are able to understand.

Keywords: *Public Relations, Communication, Negotiation, Understanding, Just PR*

Public Relations in Turkey: Career Experiences of Turkish female PR practitioners "being a woman in a male-dominated world"

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

In past thirty years public relations become an attractive profession for women. 1980's in USA literature "gender switch" term highlights the quantitative change in women and men practitioners in public relations field. In 1960's one of ten practitioner was women, but now women practitioners in USA is %70 and it can be said the percentage is similar as well in Turkey. However, as the participants state in their interviews the dominance in numbers and being general managers of agencies does not mean that women hold the power, they faced with problems of "being a woman in a male-dominated world".

The aim of this study is, to analyse the development of public relations profession in Turkey through the experiences of women public relations practitioners working in agencies as agency owners and medium-level practitioners. In this respect, at first to gain an understanding of being a women public relations professional, how they define the profession and then to discuss the impacts of feminization and gender on the profession. Since the numbers clearly show that female practitioners in public relations is higher than male practitioners.

Literature Review

In USA literature the concept of feminization is considered with the increasing number of women in public relations. The assumptions of feminization in public relations can be categorised under four headings: (1) Public relations as a management function, (2) Public relations and roles theory, (3) Public relations as a profession and (4) Gender.

Concept of feminization roots in two paths of research Excellence Theory and Roles Studies. Excellence Theory (1992), which explains public relations as a management function, may contribute to overall organizational effectiveness (Grunig et al, 2002). Glen M. Broom is the pioneer of roles research of public relations and these researches define the daily routines of public relations practitioners (Broom, 1982; Broom and Smith, 1978, 1979).

In generalizing the concept of public relations, it is important to realize that the two important aspects of public relations are, communication and dialogue. Relationship building is shaped by the status and the experiences of an individual and developed by the culture, and provides each individual for one's to communicate with their own values and assumptions. Thus, although the basic concepts are stable, public relations activi-

ties may vary according the cultural and historical development in a particular area (Hodges, 2006). Practice of public relations is shaped by the "life world" of the professionals, moreover both the experiences of the professionals and societal changes shape the profession in a particular area (Hodges, 2006).

Methodology

Since this is an on going research and till now, interviewed with thirteen women practitioners whom are the agency owners and managers in Istanbul. Moreover, interviewed with four medium-level PR practitioners. This study tries to find out through the experiences of women PR practitioners how do they define the profession and to be a woman in public relations. Currently, there are seventeen interviews, however planning to interview with two more managers and eleven more mediumlevel PR practitioners.

Results and Conclusions

After the interviews, first findings are grouped under four headings; "public relations profession", "being a women professional in public relations", "the image of public relations and women" and "reputation problem of public relations".

Women practitioners define "public relations" as a strategic communication and highlight the importance of public relations in crisis communication. Practitioners define public relations basis in understanding culture and the period, and analysing these and attributing these data to a scientific ground. Moreover, some of practitioners define public relations as a profession, some of them define as a semi-profession and the others define as a sector rather than a profession.

Practitioners define "being a woman in public relations", via the advantages and/or disadvantages of being a woman. Some practitioners think that being a woman can be both advantageous and disadvantageous, however, the others think that

neither advantageous nor disadvantageous.

Under the heading of "the image of public relations and woman", woman practitioners believe that public relations still do not find its value because of some reasons; the pioneers of the sector of women, in the past believed that practitioners should be presentable, sector get late to the developments of public relations in the world and lastly Turkey's economic, political and social impacts on the profession.

Practitioners states that the reasons of "reputation problem of public relations" as capital problems of sector, cultural and social effects, abstract results of public relations, which cannot be measurable and dishonest trading.

Since this is an ongoing project, those results above are the experiences of twelve women practitioner whom are the agency owners and managers in Istanbul. However, planning to interview with the PR professionals in these agencies who are working as medium level mangers. In order to deepen the understanding of the profession in Turkey and also it makes possible to see the generation differences and/or similarities.

Practical and Social Implications

This particular paper discusses the past and now of the profession through the experiences of PR practitioners, moreover, the effects of feminization and gender on the profession in Turkey.

Keywords: *Public relations, public relations professionals, gender, feminization.*

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Shields or targets: A rubber bullet theory of women leadership in public relations

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Literature review

Gender is one of the major axes of structural inequality that has impacted the professional field of public relations since its inception. Despite the equality laws, women in public relations face persistent disadvantages compared to men in almost all aspect of their professional lives, including employment, salary differentials, career progression, harassment, emotional abuse and exclusion from the circles of power, leading scholars to label public relations as a "pink-ghetto" work environment (Edwards, 2018). Even though public relations has undergone a process of feminization, it is well documented that women are still largely absent from leadership and senior management positions in the US and the UK with up to 80%-20% ratio in favor of men (Fitzpatrick, 2013; CIPR, 2019). On the contrary, Slovenia – the country with the lowest gender inequality in Europe – portrays a very different picture. In the government owned companies, for example, 113 women lead public relations departments, while only 39 are led by men. However, these statistics obscure gender challenges and obstacles that female leaders face in their everyday practice in the context of Slovenian culture, where everyday sexism, exclusion from ruling apparatus, gender hierarchies, gendered performativity in leadership positions and cultural norms of holding women responsible for men's behavior are omnipresent and often

remain unchallenged. Patriarchal culture underpinning institutional values and male-dominated organizational management structures still reinforces male-privilege and accord men power over women.

Purpose and theory

Based on lived experience in Slovenian public relations practice, we develop rubber bullet theory as a new feminist theory of public relations. Drawing on radical feminist premises that patriarchy devalues women and work associated with them and that female collective experiences in public relations are underpinned by injustices, oppression, silencing and symbolic violence against women (Rakow and Nastasia, 2019), rubber bullet theory assumes that female public relations leaders find themselves in a position of targets and/or shields of modernized patriarchal domination. Leadership positions are normatively associated with male traits of rationality, logic and expertise. Perpetuating gender bias stereotypes women as lacking these traits; they are expected to perform caring, nurturing and supportive roles instead. As such, they are either promoted to leadership positions to fail while preserving male-dominated circles of power (i.e. a shield) or to be held responsible for individual or organisational actions, even when they are excluded from the decision-making (i.e. a target). Rubber bullets in form of critiques, insults, humiliations, hate speech, bullying and harassment

are "fired" at them from different actors, including the publics, the media and their superiors. They are not lethal for their career, but they bruise their reputation, integrity, position, credibility, expertise and potentially lead to emotional trauma, burnout and deteriorating mental health. Some women leaders find themselves under protection of powerful men ("godfathers"), but only as long as they do not break their predefined relationship agreement. Underpinning the logic of this experience is that women in leadership are often systematically undermined, held to higher standards and considered as intruders who need to be removed from a powerful position back to their "rightful place" (Beard, 2017). The impact of these gendered regimes of injustice on organizations and public relations occupation alike is immense. It ranges from jeopardizing realization of female leadership potential to hemorrhaging female talent by women either being removed from/leaving the industry or shying away from public relations leadership positions in the first place.

Methodology

Rubber bullet theory is verified through in-depth interviews with senior women and men in leading positions in public relations in Slovenia to explore and compare their narratives of lived experience, occupational and workplace inequities, gendered performativity, institutionalized gendered meanings, stereotypes and expectations, and how they negotiate the power relations of gender in their everyday practice.

Conclusions and implications

Rubber bullet theory importantly challenges progressive premises of female career trajectory, explores dynamics of power inequality and deterioration of women in leadership and explains reproduction of the patriarchal gender relations. It importantly answers the calls for greater feminist theorizations of public relations through in-depth qualitative investigation as well as contributes to knowledge around largely under-researched gendered regimes of power, structural inequalities and social relations in Slovenia. Despite its focus on experience of women leaders in Slovenian public relations, the theory's central premises bear relevance to other (feminized) professional fields in different cultures and contexts.

Keywords: *public relations leadership, women, rubber bullet theory, radical feminism*

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Mongolia: The Missing Part of the Global Public Relations Map

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Introduction and purpose of the study.

Public relations (PR) has developed to a multi-billion-dollar global industry. It has grown deep roots in the business and social institutions of society. Emerging as one-way, instructional communication, PR has matured to a sophisticated form of communication. Despite the fact that globalisation has pushed the scholarship and practice horizon of PR across physical, economic and cultural boundaries there are still uncharted parts of the world. Mongolia is a missing part of the global PR map.

The *purpose* of the research was to explore the state of PR development in Mongolia from a professional's perspective to fill a gap in the scholarship of global public relations. Two *rationales* motivated this scientific discovery. First, it was the lack of scientific research on public relations in Mongolia. Second, the transformations Mongolia goes through, which require proactive dialogue for reaching mutual understanding in times of change. The research was guided by the overarching *research question*

What is the state of development of PR in Mongolia viewed through the theoretical framework for global public relations?

Literature review

The Western scholarship (American and British) continues to be the dominating conceptual lens through which PR is globally defined which has opened a "*chasm that needs to be bridged*" (Sriramesh & Verčič, 2009, p. xxxii). However, progress has been made. Comprehensive global public relations scholarship explored theoretical and cross-cultural complexities and trends from various angles. Sriramesh & Verčič, (2020) focused on changes in the global communication landscape and PR industry worldwide, blending research-based theory with practice. Curtin & Gaither (2007) provided a cultural-economic theoretical model of PR together with a practice matrix of PR strategies and tactics employed in a variety of political, and cultural contexts. Russ & Falls (2005) studied successful PR techniques employed in major markets around the world. Tilson and Alozie, (2004) researched PR in emerging democracies. However, Hague (2004) was the only scholar to mention Mongolia as the nation, part of North Asia, which was not part of the former Soviet Union and "most Mongolians were followers of Lamaism" (p. 349).

The larger part of the existing scientific literature on the communication industry in Mongolia focused on social media marketing (Borker, 2014; Hootsuite & We Are Social (2019), advertising (Chen, Su & Yen, 2014), branding within the tourism industry of Mongolia (Ochirkhuyag, 2018), and the media landscape (Myagmar & Nielsen, 2001).

Methodology

The research followed the pragmatism paradigm. It reflected the need for a flexibility in this first scientific inquiry, which opened public relations in Mongolia for further research. "Pragmatism never considers knowledge as final, universal, or absolute" (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019, p. 10). It also allowed addressing the limitations of the research: lack of funding and language challenges. The study employed a *comprehensive literature review* on global PR, a *document analysis* to build up the context of Mongolian PR, and an *emailed in-depth interview*, which provided insights for the state of PR. A sample of 15 Mongolian PR experts, out of 140, took part in the interview. LinkedIn was used for finding and reaching to them.

Results and conclusions

Some of the key findings inform that two-way asymmetrical communication is dominating amongst PR practitioners. The Mongolian PR sector is developing but compared to advertising it was defined as a "cottage industry". One of the reasons might be that it remains a grey area with many low-qualified or unqualified "experts" offering PR services. Mining, Financial, Telecommunications, and Entertainment are the leading industries actively employing public relations in their communications. The top management has public relations on its radar with media relations as the leading activity. Unfortunately, media relations is very close to paid media coverage. One problem distilled, namely the narrow understanding of news journalists have. Anything containing the name of a brand, company, or product is classified as advertising. With relation to this, professional relations are built exclusively on providing valuable news information. Although, the personal approach with a gift or lunch with an expectation of positive or neutral coverage in return was also indicated. Politics and the media exert the strongest influence on public relations in Mongolia.

Practical and social implications

The current study is significant because it put Mongolia on the global public relations map. Second, it shed light on the key sectors, which implement PR. It also helps practitioners to understand how to work with the media and what content they should provide.

Keywords: *Public relations in Mongolia, framework for global public relations, international public relations*

Intervention in Attention: How Can Mindfulness Help in Interpersonal Communication

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Mindfulness (focused awareness) is defined as non-judgmental awareness in the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), or it can be described as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (El Morr et al., 2019).

Literature review

What makes mindfulness recognizable in practice is our focused activities that distinguish our mindful actions from automatic behaviour. "Mindfulness in the field of communication has mainly been considered in terms of how consciously people plan their approach to a communication exchange or the extent to which they identify and respond to relevant or irrelevant information in a given situation" (Seneviratne, 2018). When we mindfully look at the world around us, especially when we are mindfully communicating, we work on a holistic approach to humanity, and we consciously engage all the senses and decide to be involved in the present moment. This understanding of one's actions is crucial in interpersonal communication, the process of message transaction between people who work toward creating and sustaining shared meaning (*Turner & West*, 2006: 6).

Methodology

Workshops called "Be Mindful" are organized by the Edward Bernays University College (henceforth: Bernays) and are offered by the Office for Student Counselling. Students who were interested in extracurricular activities registered for the workshop, forming groups of up to 15 students / participants. The "Be Mindful" workshop consists of four sessions, with one taking place each month, through four months overall. Participants are Bernays students, with 10 to 15 students in each group, in which they practice mindfulness techniques with two trainers, one psychologist and one public relations expert. While providing them with the theoretical basics of mindfulness, we mostly focused on practicing mindfulness techniques through guided exercises and explaining homework assignments. Students receive homework assignments / exercises after the workshops, which they practice until the next session. Students in the group also had the opportunity to practice mindful interpersonal communication, that is, they had the opportunity to apply the learned techniques directly under the supervision of the two trainers. Two cycles of the workshop (with two different

groups of students) have been conducted so far, and the third cycle, with a new student group, is currently underway.

Results and conclusions

Our findings are based on anonymous surveys that students complete after each session. The surveys provide feedback on how participants experience benefits from the workshop, and they state their ideas and wishes for the next workshops, as well as small self-reports on whether they practice mindfulness at home with the provided materials, and how much it helps or distracts them in their daily lives, which assignments are difficult for them to practice, and which are easy.

Our goal is to introduce young people to techniques that will help them cope with the stresses of life, while using additional techniques to improve interpersonal communication. This paper describes the techniques, which students learn and practice in mindfulness workshops, as part of extracurricular activities, and how young people can relate the experience from the workshops to interpersonal communication in their everyday lives.

Practical and social implications

While the effects of mindfulness training are mostly presented through mental health benefits, our aim is also to explore how mindfulness could improve interpersonal communication and whether it could lead to better interpersonal relations. Therefore, we decided to bring mindfulness techniques closer to students through workshops.

Keywords: *mindfulness*; *interpersonal communication*; *workshops*; *students*; *counselling*

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The swing effect of CSR between society and company

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Introduction and purpose of the study/research question

Society demands sustainability and companies react. For this they will be rewarded with a better reputation. How the sustainability reputation can be measured and managed using social listening is in the center of this study. It is based on an analysis of the sustainability reputation of the 5,000 largest companies in Germany

Corporate reputation, defined by Fombrun (1996, p. 72) as "a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describes the firm's overall appeal to all of its key constituents when compared with other leading rivals" is built-up and maintained through the convergence of multiple influences. Harris Poll (2018, p. 4) identifies six major dimensions having a crucial impact on the overall reputation; social responsibility is among these crucial dimensions.

The past actions of a firm combined with beliefs regarding the way it will behave in the future, whether or not substantiated, impact on the firms' reputations (Mishina/Block/Mannor 2012, p. 459). Therefore monitoring the perceptions of audiences is an essential part of reputation management Social listening, i.e. analysing conversations in social media, can be applied to assess reputation and may be particularly useful in assessing the audience's perceptions of the sustainability dimension, as sustainability issues are in the center of the public discussion today. Therefore the research question for the present study is "To what extent can sustainability reputation be measured by analysing social media conversations?"

Literature Review

The utilisation of social media to assesses audience opinion and gather feedback is already established; social media has been used for the co-creation of products as well gathering of competitive intelligence (Engel/Kaandorp/Elfring 2017), while Blevins and Ragozzino (2019, p. 219) and Aula & Heinonen (2016, p. 164) directly recognise that it has an important role in managing and monitoring reputation. Holsapple et al. (2014, p. 5) also advocate for social listening or the gathering of social media analytics as part of a reputation management strategy. However, neither has social listening, based on large amounts of, been applied to sustainability topics in the context of reputation management.

Methodology

The gathering of social media data is realized by the crawling of the social media platforms with the specific aim of identifying statements made regarding the topic of the research; in this

case, the sustainability dimensions associated with companies reputations. The technological ability for this approach is advanced and builds on existing capabilities; search engines already utilise crawling technology and artificial intelligence (AI) is able to identify and categorise the linguistic content of written statements. The researchers have developed a bespoke algorithm that will facilitate the collection and analysis of data which can be applied to an assessment of the sustainability dimension.

Results and conclusions

The sustainability reputation of companies can be measured based on an adapted approach to Fombrun's reputation measurement. This shows that the sustainability reputation does not have a singular effect on people's perception of a company, but that the reputation dimensions correlate with each other. This leads to the interaction of the different reputation dimensions. For example, the sustainability reputation also has an impact on the reputation of management or the reputation of products.

Practical an social implications

Measuring reputation based on social listening enables companies to react promptly to their perception by their stakeholders.

Limitations of the study/future research

A major limitation of the study is that the data is not representative for all stakeholders of the selected companies. Furthermore, the results can be distorted as indifferent people may not express themselves in social media about companies and their activities, but only fans and "haters". Future research should deal with a specification of the model, e.g. differentiating between topics.

Keywords: *sustainability reputation, reputation management, social listening, big data*

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A Road Map for Influencer Relations Best Practices

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Research Question

In the influencer-communicator relationship, is there a division of responsibility and deliverables with regards to sponsored content?

Introduction

Influencer relations as evolved rapidly over the last decade. SNSs democratized the sharing of information from peer-to-peer within social and professional networks. It has created unique opportunities for the rise of paid e word-of-mouth marketing (eWOMM). Since 2017, the scale and professionalism required of influencer campaigns has exploded. However, "how it happens" appears to still a mystery to many communication practitioners. In 2016 to 2017 there was a 325% increase in searches for the term 'influencer marketing' (Connick, 2018, p. 9). This stat illustrates that people are looking for answers about how working with influencers works.

As influencer relations is emerging as a new area of communications practice; it is not surprising that a comprehensive literature review revealed a knowledge gap in regards to a road map of best practices for communications professionals working with influencers on paid e-WOMM campaigns. Thus, a road map of how the influencer-communicator relationship works best was the goal of this research. This author proposed a model for influencer relations best practices known as the 12 Phases of Effective Influence Relations.

Literature Review

Influencers are defined as; "individuals with the capability of affecting the opinions or actions of others" (Boone, Kurtz, Mackenzie, & Snow, 2016, p.112). Within communication departments, the role or responsibility of managing the relationships with this influencers is known as influencer relations. It is defined as; "The liaison between a company and those considered to be influencers within the social media community" (Boone, Kurtz, Mackenzie, & Snow, 2016, p.112).

Social media influencers build relationships not just with their audiences but also with brands. Smith (2010) identified three phases of the evolution of bloggers (forerunner to influencers): introduction, community membership, and autonomy (2010, p.176). A recent report on influencer relations found "62% of brands compensate influencers as brand ambassadors or partners rather than one-time contractors" (Connick, 2018, p.10).

Methodology

This study used in-depth participant interviews as the primary data collection technique. N=10 interviews took place between February 12 – March 30, 2019. This study employed multiple case design looking at N=5 pre-existing relationships between influencer and communicators. Participant were recruitment using a snowball sample method. Influencers nominated commu-

nication professionals and vice-versa after being told that the person they nominate must be "exceptional at influencer relations" (in influencers case) or "at working with influencer specialists" (in communicators case).

The sample was 100% Canadian, 10% male (n=1) and 90% female (n=9). The influencer industry is female dominated, a 2019 study found 77% of influencers are women (Gesenhues, 2019). All participants agreed to be identified to help lend context and credibility to the results.

Results and Conclusions

The results of this study are a snapshot of where the relationship between influencers and communicators is, as of 2019. To find out how influencer relations works; participants were asked what their typical deal-to-delivery looked like from their vantage point. They were also asked to outline the respective responsibilities of the influencer and their partner. The findings feature both quantitative and qualitative analysis of their individual responses that revealed a workflow pattern made up of 12 distinct phases.

This study proposes a model called The 12 Phase of Effective Influencer Relations. The 12 phases are: (1) Influencer Program, (2) Influencer Roster, (3) Influencer Outreach, (4) Influencer Proposal, (5) Proposal Approval, (6) Statement of Work, (7) Content Creation, (8) Content Approval, (9) Posting Content, (10) Content Interaction, (11) Post Reporting, and (12) Pay-

ment.

The findings of this research outline who is involved at each stage, the action items, and best practices in action using examples of real influencer campaigns. Through the voices of the participants this research tells the story of how harmonious relationships between influencer and brands are created.

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Strategic Communication of At-Risk Youth Nonprofits in Israel: Is Budgeting Indeed the Main Issue

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Over the past several decades, the number of nonprofits (NPOs) has increased worldwide and accordingly received growing attention within public relations research. The present research study provides an analysis of PR of at-risk youth nonprofits in Israel, investigating the practice within the context of the connections (or their lack) between the strategic and the tactical levels. The research question addressed is: What are the PR strategies and tactics applied by at-risk youth NPOs in Israel and what are the rationales that these methods are based on?

Literature review

Whereas some studies in public relations (PR) focus on strategic elements of nonprofits, most of this research generally deals with tactical aspects (Cho & Schweickart, 2015; Goldkind, 2015; Guidry et al., 2015). Overall, there is a palpable dearth of research that holistically combines analysis of strategy and tactics in synergistic fashion. This leads to a situation in which core issues of strategic communication or fascinating professional dilemmas in NPOs are not properly addressed.

Methodology

This study's central approach is Multiple Case Study Analysis. The sample included eleven nonprofit organizations. The study is based on qualitative and quantitative content analysis of a broad database: multiple cases, media content, Facebook posts, websites (n=954), and 15 in-depth interviews with CEOs and spokespeople of the NPOs. The study distinguishes between three NPO sizes (small, medium, large). This parameter was included in order to explore whether budgetary limitation was the only (or main) factor for the NPOs' public relations choice.

Results and conclusions

The findings indicate that most of the NPOs used traditional as well as new media, but lacked broad, strategic planning – usually operating only on an ad hoc basis. Interestingly, the interviews shed light on a set of reasons aside from limited budget that hindered these organizations from applying broader and more sophisticated PR tools. One of the study's fascinating insights is the interviewees' statements that they found it very difficult to tailor the NPOs' messages to the public without harming their professional social objectives. For instance, several interviewees pointed to the fact that they frequently had to juggle between choosing messages that would clearly have an emotional impact on many but at

the price that youth might be exposed to messages depicting them as weak, vulnerable and dependent. This would obviously undercut the social workers' efforts to empower these young people and convince them that they are strong and capable of leaving the at-risk cycle. In other words, there is more to nonprofit PR limitations than budgetary restrictions. Material resource obviously plays an important role; however, the study shows this to be only one part of the larger picture.

This is also evident when differences in the NPOs' public relations according to their size were found uncorrelated. Rather, the public relations applied were mainly shaped by the core attitude of the CEOs and their perceptions regarding the necessity to treat the challenge of public relations seriously. This was true for large, "wealthy" NPOs and for small NPOs that were extremely constrained in terms of budget. The deciding factor for both types was not "budget" but rather positive awareness and understanding of the importance of public relations as a necessary condition from the start, along with a deeper understanding of their respective organizations' complexity.

Practical and social implications

This study serves as the basis for identifying strengths and weaknesses in the PR process, thus enhancing communication capabilities in public relations and creating bridges between the social work of the organization and media activity.

A wider interdisciplinary approach is needed, including such disciplines as social work, political science and education. New media are dynamic and alter rapidly. Similarly, NPOs too are not static and commonly undergo structural changes.

The findings of this study may serve as an interesting case study. However, in order to drive broader conclusions and generalizations there is a need to add more layers of knowledge using comparative analysis (studying other types of NPOs, exploring cross cultural and cross national similarities and differences, etc.) and to conduct ongoing research in order to detect the dynamics on a lengthier timeline.

Keywords: *Nonprofit, Public Relations, New Media*

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The nature of activism in Turkey

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Information technologies have recently changed the nature of activism. In particular web 2.0 tools, social networking sites, microblogging services, and content-sharing sites have introduced the opportunity for wide-scale, online social participation for activist publics by enhancing public voice. Especially social media is regarded as a novel resource that can quickly foster communication and disseminate information, thus builds and strengthens ties among activists, and publicizes social movements. The speed, credibility, openness, transparency, and interactivity of social media have eclipsed the traditional mobilization techniques of activism. Social media provide informational and relational strategic resources for activists to force the government and corporations to pay attention to what they care about and demand. In this paper the nature of activism in digitalized world and activism orientation will be discussed in terms of public relations domain. Digital activism will be handled as a new form of activism which raises awareness in general public, thus, causes corporations to change their public relations strategies. The paper aims to find out activism style of publics among generations by ensuring the validity of the scale.

Literature review

Corporations should change their strategic direction for sustainability (Bordia et al, 2004) in our continually changing organizational environment, from this point of view public relations have become a strategic driver for or-ganizations in order to achieve their goals and legitimacy which can be ensured by societal and stakeholder expectations and values. Thus stakeholder relationships have become more important than ever as legitimacy occurs only when the organisation's actions are parallel with the expectations' of society (Sutton, 1993). So it can be suggested that organisations are dependent on society for legitimisation to gain favourable reputation and to be conceived as societally responsible. At this point activist publics can be regarded as the most critic publics in public relations.

Methodology

The purpose of the study is both to test the validity of activism orientation scale (AOS) in Turkish adaptation and to find out activism style of publics among generations. Research has been carried out with 400 participants in Antalya in Turkey including baby boomer generation, X, Y and Z generations using convenience sampling in order to find out their activism style. The questionnaire form consists of the activism orientation scale (Corning & Myers, 2002), the online social activism scale (Yankah et al. 2017) and demographics. While 35 item - activism orientation scale measures an individual's orientation toward engaging in activism behaviour traditionally, 21 item online social activism scale measures an individual's participation in online social networking behaviour specifically related to social and/or political views/issues. Firstly, in order to test validity of Turkish version of the AOS scale, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are

conducted. In order to test the difference among generations one-way ANOVA test is conducted. Composite reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and HTMT values are calculated.

Results and conclusions

Although original activism orientation scale has two dimensions; conventional activism behaviours and high-risk activism behaviours, EFA results suggest that conventional activism behaviour dimension involves four-sub dimensions in Turkey context. These dimensions are labelled as influencer, participator, actor, and communicator. High risk behaviour dimension is found to be congruent with the original scale. This finding indicates that conventional activism has different levels and different reflections in Turkey. In order to find out the differences in the style of generations' online social activism, one-way ANOVA is conducted and the test results suggest that there is a statistically significant $(F(3,399)=10,375;$ $p<0.001)$ difference between generations. As expected, Post hoc test suggest that generation Z uses social media activism more than generation baby boomer, generation X and generation Y according to mean online social activism scores.

There is also statistically significant difference among generations in terms of activism orientation scale sub-dimensions. The findings suggest that different generations prefer different activism styles. Generation Z is more participator, more actor, more communicator and more high risk activist, however, low influencers than the other generations. Also the effect of gender on participator, influencer, actor, communicator, high risk activism and online social activism is tested and results show that male participants have higher scores in influencer activism and online social activism. There is no statistically significant difference with other dimensions.

Practical and social implications

When the results of the study are evaluated in terms of publics in Turkey, it can be said that new generation, generation Z, is more active both in traditional and digital activism. It can be concluded that organisation in Turkey need to change their public relations strategies from campaign management to relationship management in time.

Keywords: *Public Relations, Activism, Digital Activism*

Discourse analysis of instagram accounts of influencers in the sphere of fashion in Turkey

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The aim of our study is to find out how fashion and lifestyle influencers in Turkey represent the content provided by brands (there is a limitation to the research because in Turkey there is no legislature on disclosure of paid partnerships so every brand mention needs to be analysed), what public relations strategies and techniques they use in order to create and support their personal brands (self-branding) and finally what fashion discourse they create. The method we use is discourse analyses and as a test research we chose a sample of two Instagram accounts of fashion influencers: Ferhan Talib (@iconjane) and Billur Saatci (@billursaatci). They were one of the first fashion bloggers in Turkey hence the choice.

Main concepts. Digital communication channels opened new area for implementation of public relations efforts. Social media has become one of the significant channels where companies and individuals can share some moments from their lives and opinions on different topics. Social media are not only a channel themselves, but they also appear to be a group of individual channels. Whether some of these channels are strictly private others have become one of the most powerful media of nowadays. They are channels of influencers. Who are social media influencers?

Social media influencers can be defined as people *"who have built a sizeable social network of people following them"* and *"they are seen as a regard for being trusted tastemaker in one or several niches"* (Veirman et al., 2017). They create*"highly credible electronic Word Of Mouth".*

It is possible to define social media influencers as a new type of independent *third-party endorsers* who take part in forming opinions, tastes and making different decisions. It is believed that conveying PR message through an independent source or trusted opinion leader help to increase its value. Traditionally third-party endorsers notion has been used to define people like friends or other consumers who share their opinion about the product, service etc. and thereafter help to sell it or create certain usually positive reputation. With the appearance of Internet and especially social media the notion of friends has significantly changed, as there our friend can be literally anyone from celebrities to companies, from journalists to influencers. (Freberg et al., 2011)

Influencers, by posting in social media may become a part of a discourse or even create them. Public relations specialists also create discourses. Rose (2012) states that discourse is a collection of expressions related to a topic, field or event. This collection shows what is thought about this topic, field or event and affects the behaviour of people. As most of the social media consist not only from textual but also contains still and moving images discourse is created by both language and visual language. Ways of creating discourses, contents, management etc. of the latter

in social media is quite a large area and relatively new area of investigation.

Study of influencers marketing (Influencer Marketing, 2017) in Turkey shows that spheres where influencers are demanded the most are beauty, fashion, lifestyle and travelling. This research also shows that Instagram is the most preferred by PR and marketing departments and the most frequently used social media. These finding are not surprising considering the fact that existing culture is considered by many researches as visual (Mirzoeff, Rose, Sturken and Catwright, Lash, etc.). Fashion, lifestyle, beauty sectors cannot exist without visuals and Instagram is one of the most suitable platforms for them. Together with the opportunity to post still photos, videos and stories, Instagram allows to go live and to express ideas under the visual in the form of textual post or comment. Recently the social media also added the different functions making possible online shopping directly from Instagram.

Fashion and lifestyle influencers have become a part of everyday life of millions of people. First fashion bloggers in Turkey appear in 2008-2009. In the beginning, fashion blogging was done through blog itself but with the development of social media like Facebook and Instagram blog in its traditional form is used rarely. Yener Lutfu Mert (2018) held a small study in which he asked managers of three agency which work with influencers about the specifics of the process. These people said that Instagram is the most popular social media among clients due to the relatively low cost of the production of content and outcomes. It was also mentioned that it is important not to push influencer much with branding and other policies – they should have the liberty to show the content in their style.

Results and conclusions. It is an ongoing research which is planned to be finished in May, 2020.

Keywords: *fashion influencers, Instagram, discourse, personal branding*

The Tale of the Tape. The Most Frequently used methods and explanations of the impact of public relations used by PR professionals in a National PR Awards Competition

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Philip Katz *Charles University (Czech Republic)*
Tomáš Weiss *Charles University (Czech Republic)*

Introduction and purpose of the study

Since the very beginning of the professionalization of public relations and its formation into a business field, there has always been a question from both the clients and the public: To what extent can and does public relations affect a society or business (Sriramesh and Vercic, 2019)?

The clients simply want to know what PR professionals can do for them and how effective their work is, essentially trying to determine what they are paying for. And the public asks, who are the players and what are the motives which constitute their information sources. They might also ask who the "deus ex machina" is. The public relations field has long strived to, as Galileo said, "Measure what is measurable, and make measurable what is not," (Trendkite, 2019).

Yet, even today it is not clear to what extent or even how we can measure the impact of public relations on businesses or society, despite many attemps to describe a global standardization (Gregory and Watson, 2008; Gregory and White, 2009; McNamara, 2014). The Barcelo-na Principles (2007) mark an important milestone of the PR industry's objective to clarify the effectiveness of PR. The aim of this study is to contribute to this – still rather opaque – field of knowledge by simply asking, how do the PR professionals themselves describe the impact of public relations on organizations and society: not only what methods they use most often, but also what narratives they build when they want to tell the story of their "impact". The conceptual question is, what are the strategies of legitimization used by public relations professionals to justify their own "licence to operate", especially at a time when PR professionals are not trusted by the public (European Communication Monitor, 2019). How to the PR professionals constitute the sense-making of their own work? What methods do they use for evidence-based argumentation? What narratives do they use?

Research question: How do PR professionals themselves describe their "impact of public relations on organizations and society"? What methods and narratives do they use to define that "impact"?

Literature Review

This field has been extensively studied and analysed, from both a theoretical point of view (namely finding conceptual frameworks and analytical tools, e.g. Cutlip, Center and Broom's PII model, 1993, or MacNamara's pyramid model, 2005) and a business point of view (namely driven by the practical need of explaining the costs and benefits, e.g Lindenwann, 1993 and 1997; Hon, 1998). More detailed literature review will be provided in the full paper.

Methodology

We used a quantitative content analysis (Berger, 1993) to analyse the selected dataset of application forms, which were submitted to the Czech Public Relations Award. This award represents a "showcase" of the best practice cases and runs since 2006. The selected dataset consists of completed applications for Czech PR Award in four years, 2010, 2013, 2016 and 2019 and was further reduced only to the main categories: Business Communication, Corporate Social Responsibility and Philanthropy, Business-to-Business and Business-to-Consumer (N=255). Also, we used critical discourse analysis (Wodak and Meyer, 2015; van Dijk, 2005) to analyse the strategies of legitimization and sense-making, which are used by the public relations professionals to prove the impact and "raison d'être".

Results and Conclusions

We can state that the inclusion of at least some form of "objective" measurement method is key for describing and justifying the PR professional's outcome, and it has increased over time (84 % of applications included an objective metric in 2010 and 96 % in 2019). Most applications use measurement of more than 2 metrics, and again, this number has evolved over time. However, when it comes to the question of outputs vs. outcomes, the number of applications measuring outputs has increased from 51 % to 62 % from 2010-2019, while the measuring of outcomes has stayed stable measuring between 33-34%. In 2019, 60% of applications only used quantitative metrics for measurement, but only 36% include both quantitative and qualitative metrics. Only 16% of applications state clear goals, which can be objectively measured (91 % state goals without specifying how they will be measured). More detailed results and conclusions, including the results of the critical discourse analysis, will be provided in the full paper.

Practical and Social Implications

Despite the Barcelona Principles, it is clear that the PR professionals still stick to the "clippings" practice, using only more sophisticated metrics, but still focusing more on the outputs and not as much on the outcomes. The impact on return on investment (ROI), brand-awareness or reputation is still merely the PR professionals "talking" or self-legitimization narrative, as opposed to a measured quality. Also, the argumentation of the PR professionals, when explaining their own contribution to the business or the society, was essentially vague and not clearly stated.

Discussion

This study is based on a rather limited dataset of national PR award applications, and, therefore, it intentionally only includes the "best practice" case studies. Therefore, the question – and also the answer – cannot be "what represents the reality", or "the whole field", but it is "what do the PR professionals think is the best that represents their work".

Keywords: *public relations*; *document analysis*; *evaluation methods*; *strategies of legitimization*; *sensemaking*; *evidence-based argumentation*

Earned Media in a Digital World: Relationships with Modern Journalists

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Journalism and public relations have an intertwined history, often marked by clashes born of a dearth of mutual respect and comprehension. Even today many reporters dismiss the "flack" as an obstacle to overcome on the way to information, and many public relations professionals are disdainful of the "muckraker" they expect will twist truth or sensationalize the trivial. While these counterproductive stereotypes persist, they are not ubiquitous. Examples of mutually beneficial cooperation between the professionals abound. After all, "both professions value information and serve the public interest" (Yang, Taylor & Saffer, 2016, p. 150). This study examines positive and negative experiences between journalists and public relations professionals through in-depth interviews with a variety of reporters and a variety of communicators who deal with the media.

The research question is how and to what extent can public relations professionals build trusting relationships with journalists?

Literature review

The acrimonious yet interdependent relationship between journalists and their public relations counterparts has been widely studied. Schonhagen and Meissner (2016) posit that the professions differ in terms of the interests they represent; PR in a particular interest and

journalism in the interests of society in general, but the differences don't necessarily conflict: "PR is providing vital input for the ongoing social discourse which is mediated by journalism" (p.754). Traditional sources of news are floundering in the digital era, almost without exception, while public relations continues to grow as a profession, but both professions are necessary to a fully functioning society; "without public communication and publicity there can be no democracy" (Vercic & Vercic, 2016, p. 497).

Grunig (1990) posited that "public relations should have an interactive, rather than a manipulative relationship with the media" (p. 18). Grunig (2006) also described the volatile nature of relationships, and the necessity of "trust, control mutuality, satisfaction and commitment" (p. 16).

Methodology

Data for this qualitative research study will be largely gleaned from in-depth interviews with an equal number of journalists and media relations practitioners; including at least twenty participants. Interview questions are based on the following research questions: (RQ1) How and to what extent do journalists and PR professionals have conflict and hold negative views of one another? (RQ2) How and to what extent do journalists and PR professionals fruitfully collaborate and hold positive views of one another? (RQ3) How and to what extent can journalists

and PR professionals trust one another?

This study is at the McMaster University Research Ethics Board approval stage. Interviews will be conducted later in February 2020. The research paper will be finalized and presented to academic supervisors by April 1, 2020.

Results and Conclusions

Some journalist participants will likely insist that there can be never be trust established between a public champion and a paid representative, and some PR participants may echo the sentiment. However, this study is expected to yield valuable insight into the experiences of journalists and public relations professionals. The results will include recommendations on how intolerances can be eased, on how cooperation can be increased, and on how trust can be fostered in media relationships.

Practical and social implications

Ideally, this study will inform better understanding and cooperation between journalism and public relations professionals, and lead to further research about how that cooperation can cultivate trust, control mutuality, satisfaction and commitment; in other words, or relationships. If journalists better understand ethical public relations, they may help alleviate the perpetual spin-doctor perception. If public relations professionals better understand the needs and goals of journalists, they could be helpful champions of the media at a time when help is most needed.

Keywords: *journalism, media relations, relationships, trust*

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The influence of city public diplomacy on the fight against global climate change

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The city public diplomacy is the activity of international political communication that most has grown the most in the last decade, as a consequence of the new demographic structure, the transformation of political and economic power, the impact of climate change and citizen empowerment. City public diplomacy facilitates the consolidation of new spheres of power that use international communication to be reputed, influence or create the illusion of participating. Local government offers concrete, real and effective solutions, close to the citizen's experience. These are not mediated experiences, but rather are led by the citizen.

In this research we are interested the city public diplomacy on the fight against global climate change. On one hand, this project attempts to understand the position and characteristics of the city as an actor within the political system and its international political communication strategies. On the other hand, it studies the leadership capacity expressed through the actions of the Mayor's Office. From both, it results a methodological innovation in the study of international political communication actions designed to influence globalization that adds: direct pressure on national governments and mediated lobbying, typical of citizen activism that demands a change in public policies. This research aims to demonstrate that the Ibero-American mega-cit-

ies have become key actors in public diplomacy, using their soft power to influence the legislation of areas over which they do not have full competences but that affect them in a determinant, like the environment in a context of climate change.

Also trough the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) perspective and the 2030 Agenda, cities deem a greater role in achieving these objectives instead of states that leadered the Millennium Development Goals until 2015. Currently, there are international projects that measure the fulfillment of SDGs in the urban environment such as British Columbia 2030 or Baltimore Neighborhood Indicator Alliance (BNIA). Cities can become highly influential in the new global order by taking a lead in grey areas like climate change, where State capacity is less relevant in terms of public policy execution.

Literature review

Diplomacy is an activity that uses strategic communication in the process of building the international reality. Diplomatic actors intervene in international political communication with the aim of influencing through different informative, cultural and educational mechanisms. Public diplomacy is defined as the management of international political communication in accordance with action and foreign policy interests. Signitzer and Coombs (1995) have explored the relationship between public relations and public

diplomacy and have found a natural process of convergence with similar objectives and similar tools to reach them. Governments try to influence through strategic communication effort and public diplomacy to other nations and citizens. The value of public relations and strategic communication of public sector has increased (Canel, 2007). And also the impact of municipal policy on multilevel management and regulation is an issue on the global research agenda (Barber, 2013; Schragger, 2016).

Methodology

The research is carried out at two levels: quantitative, recording the presence or absence of 65 indicators that characterize the strategy of international public diplomacy of 30 cities (15 Ibero-American, 15 Spanish); qualitative, studying through semi-structured interviews the public environmental diplomacy of five Ibero-American megacities: Madrid, Barcelona, Mexico City, Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires.

Results and Conclusions

This investigation is part of a project that in the next two years will try to know the environmental policy network of each of the cities and the particularity of the public diplomacy of the cities and the strategies of international communication (lobby, advocacy, trust-confidence narratives, social media, personal branding, mayors' leadership, place branding and events) that are designed in the process of political decision, having as object of study the climate change.

Practical and Social Implications

It is hoped to discover how cities use public relations and public diplomacy to influence environmental issues and fight against climate change

Keywords: *Public affairs, public relations, public diplomacy, climate change, SDG*

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Whom do we serve?

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Introduction and purpose

Today's sharing economy demands societal engagement and authentic dialogue with organisations who in turn are expected to act in the best interest of the end-user (i.e. the stakeholder). Communicators act both as custodians of stakeholder relationships and the voice of the organisation they represent. This multi-faceted role raises an important question for the public relations function. Whom do we serve?

This paper presents a selection of findings from a doctoral study on the potential of public relations in the strategic thinking process called: Communication at the Core: Exploring decision-making when communication is at the heart of an organisations' strategy development. The paper specifically examines the concept: Whom do we serve? which consistently appeared throughout the findings.

Literature Review

The literature review draws scholarship from studies of public relations, strategy, group dynamics and decision-making.

Greek in origin, strategy originally refers to the positioning of troops before battle. Organisations describe strategy as the ability to understand, predict and leverage stakeholder behaviour operating in an environment in which people and resources continually interact (Henderson, 1989, pp. 139–143). Strategy is also the product of history and learned experience (Schein, 2010). Understanding who, what, why, and how organisations and stakeholders have reached a particular point paves the way for strategic changes "allowed" by the existing culture (Darling, 2017, pp. 64–67) and creates "irreversible momentum" (Burt, 2010, p. 70).

Public relations is "the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships [ ] on whom success or failure depends" (Cutlip cited by Broom and Sha, 2013, p. 26). Value comes through relationships (Grunig and Grunig, 2010, p. 5) and "getting people to do what you want them to do" (Trolley, James L. cited by Grunig, 1992, p. 38). Relationships are based on one-way, two-way and omni-directional communication (van Ruler, 2018, p. 368) with "the flow of purposeful communication" and "continuous transactions" (Edwards, 2012, p. 21). Public relations professionals adopt highly co-operative behaviours which are underpinned by concern for others and perceived stakeholder needs. Behaviours change depending on the stakeholder and purpose of the interaction (Thomas and Kilmann, 1978, pp. 1143–1144; Thomas, 2016, p. 266).

Method, sample size and rationale

Public relations is "fluid and complex" (Gower, 2006, pp. 177–190) and benefits from a qualitative approach to highlight current experience and facilitate "ongoing dialogue" (Kane, 1995, p. 51; Creswell, 1998, p. 51; Moss, Vercic and Warnaby, 2000, pp. 7–48; Quinn Patton, 2002, p. 69). This was a mixed methods study incorporating meaning orientated meth-

odologies such as interviewing, active listening and participant observation and identification of emerging patterns and findings (phenomenological & grounded theory traditions). Thirty-four semi-structured interviews took place between 2018 and 2019. Participants worked in their respective organisations internationally at director or at board level in a leadership or communications function. Follow up included transcript reviews as well as documentary and archival analysis of the findings.

Findings

The research found that the sector is in perpetual flux, transitioning from a process-driven function into an organic, always on transactional flow. Secondly, capabilities such as sensemaking (Fiske, 1982) and identifying patterns & inter-relationships (Meighan and De Ruijter, 2016; Fuller et al., 2018, pp. 233–252) are emerging as basic requirements. Thirdly end-user needs rated ahead of the organisation as indicators shaping the direction of modern strategy and communication with priorities shifting from profit and shareholder value towards trust and doing the right thing profitably. This suggests that communication is moving towards cocreation with stakeholders built on trust and making a difference.

Communication was positioned as an authentic voice enabling genuine stakeholder discourse rather than simply communicating for advantage (Moloney, 2006, p. 165). Furthermore authenticity assumes that social relevance and adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a given. Critical and consequential thinking, doing the right thing and accessing ones' moral compass to guide decision-making emerged as essential capabilities opening further dialogue on Whom do we serve?

Further analysis suggests that credibility and reputation are directly linked with who communicators choose to serve first. Professionals working directly with the CEO were perceived as the mouthpiece of the organisation, politically motivated and followers or influencers. Those positioned as trouble-shooters or the conscience of the organisation team were thought leaders and change-makers acting in the best interest of everyone.

Results, conclusions and implications

Assessing the implications for communication professionals who curate and enable stakeholder & organisation dialogue warrants further examination. Are they appropriately skilled and resilient to adapt to constant change and clearly articulate who they serve and their motivation? Communicators are well positioned to leverage the opportunities this paradigm creates so that society thrives and authenticity driven indicators such as the SDGs are within reach. The question for the sector is: Exactly who do we serve? and in what context?

Keywords: *public relations, strategy, societal impact, capabilities*

Bringing Positive Impact to the Society: A Model of Authentic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Communication

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Public relations contributes to the society by helping organizations to be socially responsible and engage with stakeholders. CSR communication research in public relations has been focusing on how organizations communicate CSR initiatives (such as utilizing digital/social media, CSR reports, etc.), the outcomes of CSR communication (such as financial returns and consumer purchase intention), CSR communication being a strategic communication tool (e.g. using CSR in handling crises, engaging stakeholders), and strategic CSR communication (e.g. creating shared value (CSV) communication. Despite the positive results CSR and CSR communication have brought to organizations, not much research has been done on how organizations should practice CSR so as to be considered genuine and authentic, and to reduce the skepticism toward CSR among publics. Organizations need to be authentic in their CSR communicative behaviors. Therefore, the purpose of this theory paper is to develop a model of authentic CSR communication on how a corporation can substantially contribute to the society and not being viewed as "greenwash."

Literature review

The literature of this research includes the topics of CSR skepticism, organizational values, leadership in CSR communication, dialogic communi-nication, organizational listening (Macnamara, 2018), and authenticity.

The current CSR literature has been focusing on the economic benefits of addressing societal needs (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). The term strategic CSR also implies corporations' choosing stakeholders' issues that align best with the corporations' needs (Porter & Kramer, 2006). As a result, this approach has caused extensive skepticism toward corporate CSR behaviors among the publics. CSR skepticism means "publics/ inclination to question, disbelieve, and distrust an organization's CSR motives, management, and business, CSR outcomes, and the claim of socially responsible positions and actions" (Rim & Kim, 2016, p. 250).

CSR is defined as organizational activities designed to create a positive impact on the society (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015). Therefore, CSR initiatives should focus on the actual positive impact such initiatives can bring to a society, instead of economic rewards. To that end, I adopted the concept of authentic CSR from the management literature (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2015) in articulating the focus on how a corporations' core values drive its behaviors, a leadership with caring and genuine qualities, how public relations can help engage in dialogues and listen to publics' concerns, and partnering with stakeholders in the process of the CSR initiatives. I also argue that, in evaluating the outcomes of

CSR initiatives and communication, the focus should be on the actual impact to the society, instead of benefits corporations obtain in this process.

Conclusion

A model on organization authentic CSR communication model is developed with the emphasis on co-creating with stakeholders on corporate CSR effort.

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The importance of reputation and legitimacy for financial supervisors

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Although reputation and legitimacy are intensely researched concepts, when it comes to the public sector, they remain in the blind spot of investigations. With the aim to diminish this gap, the paper investigates the importance of reputation and legitimacy for a specific kind of public authority – financial supervisors.

The hypothesis that the study explores is that strong positive reputation and legitimacy bring valuable benefits to supervisors, widen the room for manoeuvre, and ultimately, lead to the reduction of implementation costs of interventions.

Literature review

Given the elevated importance of the relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders, extensive research on the fields of organisational studies and communications aims to capture the essence and key processes of reputation and legitimacy.

The targeted review of the relevant literature – among which Bitektine (2011), Deephouse and Suchman (2008), King and Whetten (2008), and Tyler (2006) shall be highlighted – enabled the identification of key attributes of these concepts. Hence, reputation expresses 'uniqueness', refers to an 'ideal standard', and can be viewed as an 'intangible asset'. As a complex, multidimensional phenomena, it is strongly related to cred-

ibility, results from stakeholder judgement, and is built overwhelmingly by 'behaviour'. Whilst legitimacy – a complex, multidimensional concept established on a trust-based relationship – expresses 'similarity' and refers to a minimum standard of 'acceptance'. Agencies are considered gatekeepers of (normative) legitimacy, but also exposed to social judgements, often based on inconsistent expectations.

Methodology

In the paper a descriptive, qualitative, phenomenological research approach is applied, following a 'general-to-specific' perspective. The targeted, systematised literature review covers relevant theories, stylised facts, and empirical results.

Results and conclusions

Organised around the research question, the analysis proves that – such as common understanding in the corporate world – legitimacy and reputation are sophisticated resources attributing important benefits to public agencies.

It is shown that the opportunity provided by legitimacy and reputation through a higher level of credibility, recognition, and trust translates into enhanced, voluntary deference and higher acceptance of the authority's decisions. This behaviour leads to the widening of the room for manoeuvre and higher efficiency by reducing implementation costs of corrective measures and

that of new policies, providing prospect to pursue long-term objectives, and by creating protective buffer in turbulent times. Furthermore, both strong legitimacy and reputation contributes to safeguard political independence.

It also revealed, however, that reputation and legitimacy remain underused resources for financial supervisors. The main constraints can be linked to the difficulties in determining and expressing 'uniqueness', in gaining socio-political legitimacy amid low prominence, and to overcome measurement limitations caused by the lack of quantifiable policy variable. While the effective management of reputation and legitimacy would require overarching management and communications strategy, capacity constraints and the 'lagging behind' nature of the public sector pose further challenges.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

Since the study focuses solely on demonstrating the importance of reputation and legitimacy to financial supervisors, research on the use of ideal institutional communicational tools and optimal strategies would be a straightforward extension of the paper. Considering the substantial differences in the institutional setup into which agencies are embedded, the area also represents fertile ground for comparative analyses and case studies. Furthermore, the interplay of legitimacy and reputation with related fields – such as the specificities of the relationship with the media, the role of financial supervisors in agenda-setting, or specific areas of reputation, such as social responsibility – also offers promising opportunities for future investigations.

Practical and social implications

The mission of public entities is directly linked to social good and the benefits of adequate functioning are widespread among the members of the society. Proper interaction between author-

ities and citizens may result in more tailored solutions provided by the state, moving towards a more effective, cooperative model. Despite the evidence that behaviour is the key influencer of reputation and legitimacy, it is evident that PR has a pivotal role in the management of the interaction with stakeholders and in the enhancement of visibility and prominence. As concluded by the study, procedural and cost efficiency of agencies – apart from the better achievement of their goals determined in terms of the public interest – contributes to the reduction of operating costs and that of interventions. Although the paper focuses on financial supervisors, its conclusions are adaptable to other kinds of public agencies.

Keywords: *reputation*; *legitimacy*; *financial regulators*; *public sector*

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Role of Art in Facilitating Communication between Companies and Society: A Case Study of Benesse Art Site Naoshima

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Benesse is a company specializing in distance learning for children with an annual revenue of 439.4 billion yen. Benesse has spent 30 years building art facilities on Naoshima Island, Japan and creating site-specific art museums and works of contemporary art. In 2010, the first Setouchi Triennale was held on Naoshima and neighboring islands in the Seto Inland Sea area. In 2011, Naoshima was selected as one of the "Seven Wonders" by Conde Nast Traveler. Furthermore, in 2019, Setouchi topped the National Geographic Traveler's "cool list." These days, people from all over the world are visiting Naoshima.

However, why is a private company supporting the arts? Examining the case of Benesse and their support for the arts on Naoshima, this research seeks to clarify the role of corporate support for art in building relationships between companies and stakeholders such as art organizations and employees.

Literature review

Art support has received scholarly attention in multiple disciplines. In the advertising field, research on art sponsorship sees it as a form of promotion. In the field of art management, sponsorship and partnerships have been studied in the context of fundraising by art organizations. Such scholarship points out that partnership with art organizations provide long-term competitive advantages for companies, encouraging them to build long-term relationships with stakeholders. Can these examples be considered in the context of public relations (PR)? Therefore, this paper applies the stakeholder theory central to PR to examine the role of support for art plays in the communication between companies and stakeholders.

Methodology

This is a case study of Benesse Art Site Naoshima that relies on in-depth interviews with stakeholders to examine the role of art support on the island. Interviews were conducted with the founder of the art site, Fukutake Foundation manager, president of a facility management company, a person working for the Naoshima Tourism Association, a PR representative for a support company, and a local resident.

Results and conclusions

Our results demonstrate two significant roles of art support; one role is to communicate a message that can permeate the corporate philosophy. The art site was created owing to Benesse's honorary advisor Soichiro Fukutake's passion. His motivation was to resist the negative aspects of

hyper-modernization and urbanization. Naoshima became bald due to sulfur dioxide exposure at a smelting plant. Mr. Fukutake used the power of art to ask the question, "Is this really just society?"

The word Benesse means "to live well"; thus, Naoshima is a place to think about what it means to live well. Benesse utilizes this art venue in Naoshima to advocate a message to the society regarding what it means to live well. As Picasso created Guernica, Mr. Fukutake interrogates the social crisis through art projects. Additionally, the art site functions as a PR tool for the company to build good relationships with its stakeholders. This is not a one-way communication, but rather a two-way multi-directional communication.

The second role is to politely raise issues with the public by sending targeted messages through the medium of art. By utilizing high-quality art as a medium to raise awareness about certain important issues in modern society, it is possible to avoid appearing dictatorial, and instead provoke the public to come together in thinking about the challenges we face. Indeed, contemplating art provides a space for various stakeholders to think together. In particular, contemporar art tends to present new values, so it is an effective communication tool.

Practical and social implications

Benesse's support for the arts provides diverse values to many stakeholders. For example, employees have been impressed by its corporate philosophy, thereby increasing their commitment to the company. Moreover, recognition from global media outlets has had a secondary effect; such recognition acknowledges not only the contributions of the key players, such as global investors and business partners, but also aids the understanding of the corporate philosophy. Having people visit from across the globe brings pride to the islanders.

Therefore, companies should not just fund the arts. It is crucial that they promote their own message and values through art support and that their quality and direction are consistent. For example, in media relations, PR representatives should not receive media exposure that does not match the quality or direction. Artists must engage in dialogue with companies concerning advocacy messages while maintaining their creative spirit. Local governments should also value corporate philosophies and facilitate dialogue with the community, rather than simply inviting companies to sponsor art facilities.

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Keywords: *art support, advocacy message, corporate philosophy, stakeholders, place to think together*

Exploring Corporate Commitment to Organizational Purpose and its Outcomes

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Organizational purpose is a term that has been in the academic lexicon for decades (e.g., Warriner, 1965) but has recently been a centerpiece of several conversations in the world of public relations and corporate leadership. As Larry Fink, CEO and chairman of Blackrock stated, "Purpose is not a mere tagline or marketing campaign; it is a company's fundamental reason for being – what it does every day to create value for its stakeholders." However, few recent academic efforts have sought to understand what purpose means for organizations in general and for public relations specifically. The goal of this study therefore is to present a scale to measure a company's commitment to organizational purpose, as well as its impact on internal corporate outcomes for public relations professionals, i.e., PR being valued in their organizations, and a corporate culture that is agile to the changing environment.

Literature review

Corporate purpose, defined as "a company's expressed overriding reason for existing" (Ellsworth, 2002, p. ix), has been discussed extensively in management scholarship. Traditional outlooks of management consider corporate purpose in two broad ways: as maximizing shareholder wealth, or as optimizing customer value (Ellsworth, 2002). Recent moves from business leaders, however, have sought to position a company's purpose not only for shareholders and customers, but for all stakeholders including the "communities in which we work" ("Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation," 2019, para 7), putting stakeholder communication at the forefront. However, what constitutes a company's commitment to purpose, as perceived by their employees who are the forefront of communicating this purpose remains a key question. In this study, we draw upon management and public relations literatures to propose and test a 6-point scale of commitment to organizational purpose. We posit corporate commitment to organizational purpose to consist of a clearly articulated and understood purpose, importance given to purpose, and purpose being tied to communication strategy, marketing strategy, and market capitalization. We also test its relationship with two internal corporate outcomes.

Methodology

The data for this study come from a broader collaboration between [university] and [industry partner] (blinded for peer review). Surveys were conducted among the members of [industry partner] as well as three other trade organizations to understand public relations and communication professionals' perceptions about their employers' commitment to purpose in their

own organizations, and the relationship between those perceptions and the extent to which their corporate cultures are agile and public relations is valued. Data were collected between April and June of 2019. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (EFA and CFA respectively) were conducted to develop a 6-point scale to measure commitment to organizational purpose, followed by structural equation modeling to test the hypotheses.

Results and conclusions

Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were found to support the 6-point scale to measure perceived commitment to organizational purpose within the organization (see Figure 1 for details of EFA and CFA). Such commitment was found to be positively associated with the extent to which respondents reported public relations being valued in the organization. Furthermore, perceived commitment to organizational purpose was also positively associated with an agile and adaptable corporate culture.

Practical and social implications

The purpose of this study was twofold: first we sought to propose and test a scale to measure companies' commitment to organizational purpose perceived by their PR professionals, and second, we posited two outcomes of such corporate commitment to organizational culture as reported by public relations professionals. Our results not only validated the 6-point scale, thus providing scholars with a valid and reliable instrument to measure this multi-dimensional construct, but also provided two key insights. We found that organizations whose PR professionals perceived a strong focus on organizational purpose also reported public relations being valued in the organization, and a corporate culture that is agile to the demands of a dynamic environment. These results point to the important role played by a concerted corporate focus on purpose. Organizations that exert effort into ensuring that purpose is clearly articulated, understood, and incorporated across strategic decision-making may reap the benefits not only by their employees feeling more valued but also by encouraging a more agile corporate culture.

Keywords: *agility, confirmatory factor analysis, purpose, structural equation modeling*

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Figure 1. Results of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses.

Exploratory Factor Analysis
Bartlett test of sphericity
$X^2(15) = 2447.816, p < .001$
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy
KMO = 0.866
Eigenvalue: 4.031; 67.19%

Confirmatory Factor Analysis
$X^2(8) = 78.89, p < .001$
CFI = .971
SRMR = .032
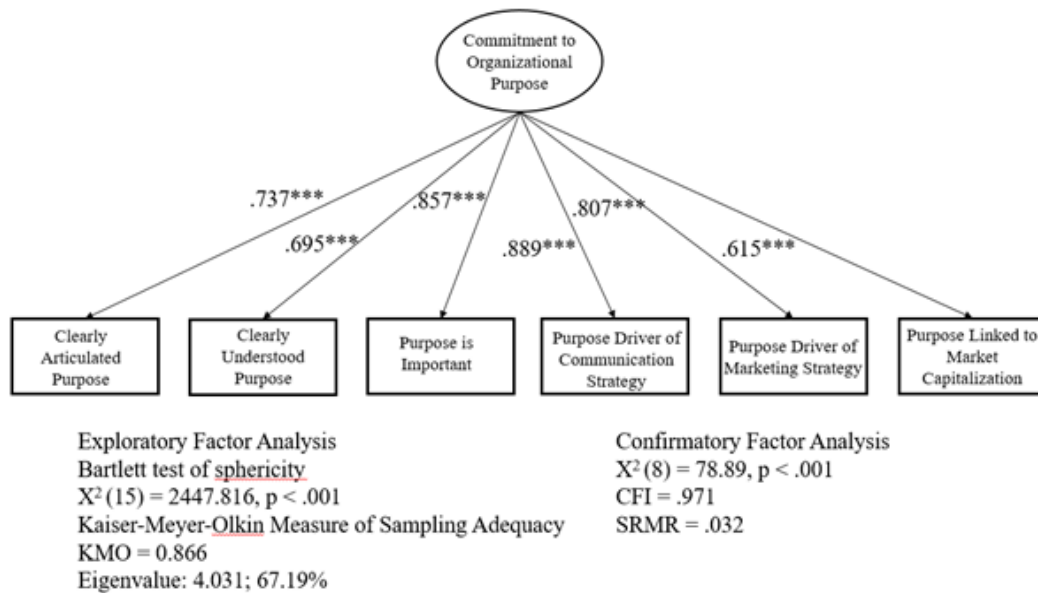
Figure 2. Results of structural equation modeling.

Measurement Model
$X^2(16) = 80.25, p < .001$
CFI = .975
SRMR = .033
RMSEA = .080

Structural Model
$X^2(11) = 98.69, p < .001$
CFI = .968
SRMR = .046
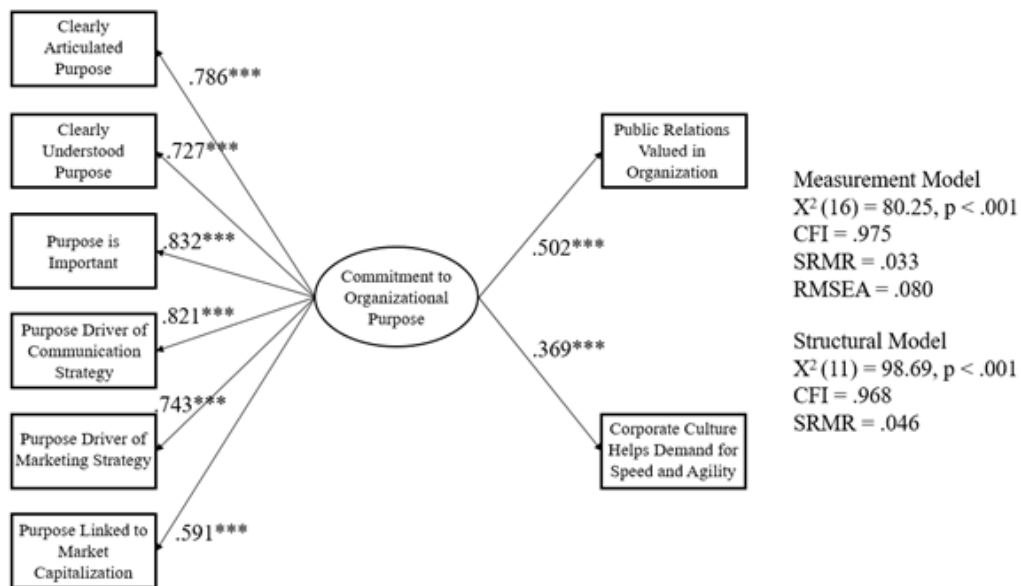
The role of public relations models in universities communication. Case study of University North

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Due to the importance of education in society today, public relations are extremely important for the successful functioning of each educational institution. Almost all universities are faced with a number of problems, such as inadequate and uncertain financial support, student competition is fierce and expensive, state restrictions and regulations make it harder and more difficult to lead the university, academic freedom and the issue of persistent vocational qualifications affecting external stakeholders (Broom, 2010: 455). In addition to that, universities are also faced with public relations problems other than anything in the past. It takes a lot of time to manage reputation and strengthen the image of the university, which involves building trust with key audiences. The progress of communication technology requires universities to respond faster than ever before. In order to achieve the goals, public relations programs at universities generally focus on the following key public: students, teaching staff, rectors, faculty deans, administrative and expert councils, administrative staff and expert services, alumni, student families, student associations, cities and local self-government, media, other universities, government, community. In this regard, the purpose of the paper is to identify and describe the public relations models in promoting and strengthening the visibility and reputation of universities with an emphasis on public dialogue.

Literature review

The theoretical framework of this paper is based on Grunig and Hunt's work *Managing Public Relations* (1984), which describes four public relations models: **the model of a print agent**, **a model of public information**, **a two-way asymmetric model** and a **two-way symmetric model.** Models explain the role of public relations in organizations and are described with the help of two concepts: the nature of communication (one-way vs. two-way) and the purpose of communication (persuasion vs. mutual understanding). While the media agent model is moderate to the creation of publicity, or to causing media attention (Wilcox et al., 2001: 43), a model of public information is used by "home journalists" to disseminate objective information through mass media and controlled media. Both models are one-way and their communication programs are not based on research and strategic planning. The two-way symmetric model uses two-way communication, but the flow of information between organizations and the public is still unbalanced (for the benefit of the organization). Feedback is used solely for manipulative purposes (Newsom et al., 2000: 18). According to Grunig and Hunt (1994: 8), the two-way symmetric model implies a mutually balanced communication aimed at understanding and using dialogue and negotiation between the organization and the public. Although, Grunig advocated the symmetric model as the only ideal

form of public relations, driven by criticism, he developed a new, general situational model of excellence in public relations. This model is a mix of asymmetry and symmetry that is used to make organizations and the public a win-win zone, an area where both sides are victorious.

Methodology

The case study method was applied in the research. The University North case study aims to identify and describe which existing offline public relations models are used in university communication and to explore and analyze the application of operational-technical and managerial-strategic roles of public relations (Broom & Dozier, 1984, Van Ruller & Vercic, 2002; Steyn & Bütschi, 2003). The main question of this research is: is there a significant difference in the use of an offline model of public relations between operational-technical and managerial and / or strategically oriented public relations services at the University North.

Results and conclusion

The results of the conducted research have confirmed that public relations play a vital role and contribute to enhancing the visibility and reputation of the university. Moreover, it is evident that public relations are of the utmost importance in accomplishing objectives that universities set: develop two-way communication between universities and key publics, raise awareness of educational issues, strengthen and maintain the image and reputation of universities among the most targeted public. Also, the analysis of public relations modeling in the work process and the performance of public relations services at the University North showed that although the public relations model is applied in the communication environment, the public information model for one-way dissemination of information is still the most widely used.

Practical and social implication

The results serve as an indicator that universities, whether private or public, need to devote more attention to the role and importance of public relations model in the higher education system. In addition to that, the results serve as an indicator that public relations can contribute to maintaining two-way and transparent communication between universities and the public, and helping them achieve their goals.

Keywords: *public relations models, universities, visibility, case study.*

Reputation Management: Personal Reputations Versus Corporate Reputations

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Introduction and purpose of the study

There is no paucity of literature in reputation management when it comes to corporate and organizational reputation; however, limited attention has been given to reputation management strategies of individuals. In socially networked societies, private individuals, just as celebrities, experience unrestricted exposure to niche networks and public scrutiny, thus, there is a more significant potential for reputation damage than experienced in the past. Also, the widespread use of social media has made individuals' reputations particularly vulnerable.

The purpose of the study is to draw attention to the study of personal reputations as a separate and distinct field of study from corporate reputations.

Literature review

The literature on corporate reputation management comes from various disciplines such as marketing, business, economics, and others, which inevitably allows multiple ways of theorizing and conceptualizing reputations (Lange et al. 2011). There is considerable corporate reputation literature that is pertinent to personal reputations. For example, Lange et al. (2011) operationalized reputation as familiarity (being known), future expectations, and perception of how others view an entity. Bromley (1993) theorized that reputations are culturally and socially constructed, established over time, and are advantageous to the entity. However, empirical evidence shows that individual reputations are not uniform; individuals may have good reputations in some communities, while simultaneously have negative reputations in others. Further, reputations are non-static and can intensify and deteriorate over time (Coombs & Holladay, 2006).

Reputations are known as intangible assets of an entity such as credibility, competitive advantage, fame, and esteem (Veh, Gobel, & Vogel, 2018). Because different stakeholders are concerned with different aspects of a corporation's reputation, their views on what reputation means can vary based on the primary stakeholder's main concern. For example, when communicating with stockholders, financial stability acts as a reputation while addressing critics, corporations often gauge reputation as corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Ertug, Yogev, Lee, & Hedstrom, 2016).

On the other hand, personal reputations are different in that these constitute individual identities and are primarily conceived by others, the public, based on their perceptions.

The study further elaborates on these differences and their significance with four premises; one, personal reputations are co-created with the

public; two, reputations are permanent; finally, reputations are made by comparison to a protagonist or an antagonist (Latif, 2020).

Methodology

This research comprises literature review and empirical evidence to support the hypothesis that reputations of individuals and corporations are similar but different on many social and sociological basis.

Results and conclusions

Paper provides recognition of the differences that lie in reputations of individuals and corporations. For example, the threats that personal reputations experience are often different from corporate reputations, such as character assassination attacks and gossip. Similarly, the motivations for reputation management in individuals and corporations are different, for example, profits and brand recognition may motivate corporations; whereas, individuals may be motivated by self-identity and saving face during reputation threats. The primary limitation of the research is that this is a theoretical paper, so the inferences drawn from empirical observations will require further quantitative and qualitative research.

Practical and social implications

The analysis draws attention to the growing need for more research in personal reputation and a better understanding of the motivations that are putting personal reputations at increased vulnerability. The social implications of these motivations may call for improved social media practices and policy regulations.

Further, public relations practitioners will find this research helpful in dealing with personal reputations crises as there are different social and psychological implications attached to personal reputation crises. For example, the social structures that are disrupted when the reputations of respected individuals are maligned.

Keywords: *Public relations, corporate reputation management, personal reputation management, social identity, facework*

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Conspiratorial Publics in Digital Peril: Consumer Skepticism on Corporate Issues and Media Effects

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Introduction

Conspiracy theories permeate society. They play a two-sided role, encouraging rational skepticism but also undermining social trust. This new age of digital networking has seen a notable rise in conspiratorial thinking's detrimental effects. Citizens and publics throw skeptical eyes toward the issues affecting their interests, developing negative attitude toward all parties involved, as well as toward politicians and other government policy makers. Consumers and customers treat corporations with suspicion and are quick to attribute any problem to a larger conspiracy. The situation only worsens as citizens and publics gain access to more information, which most use to reinforce their distrust. In most cases, this conspiratorial thinking weakens necessary social ties and processes that allow social institutions to optimally function.

Literature Review

Scholars have paid heed to the thriving misinformation that spreads though social media during the election campaign periods (e.g., 2016 US presidential election campaign) and warned of increasingly polarized publics (e.g., Sunstein, 2017). Changing communication settings and ICTs available to citizens and publics often deepen the personal and group entrapment into various conspiratorial beliefs. In fact, today's diversified and hyperpartisan media choices are alleged to be one of the substantial factors of producing collectives who have low confidence in official facts. Misinformation and fake news are widespread and rarely scrutinized on online media platforms. Thus, media use has considerable impacts on the public's engagement with conspiratorial beliefs.

Despite this, few studies have investigated the association between media use behavior and conspiratorial view. Radu and Schultz (2017) pointed out that conspiracy theories have not been a central topic of communication and media studies. Only a few have discussed the relationship between media effects and conspiracism; however they have found such a relationship notable. For example, news media literacy was reported as a crucial variable for the endorsement of conspiratorial thinking (Craft, Ashley & Maksl, 2017).

Research Questions and Methodology

We applied a new procedure for the identification of "conspiratorial publics" (Kim & Grunig, in press) and studied a conspiratorial public's media use patterns and relationships with the rise/fall of conspiratorial thinking on corporate issues. We examined three research questions: 1) What types of media do conspiratorial publics use frequently for corporate issues? 2) Do con-

spiratorial publics show hostile media perception or projection bias (Gunther et al., 2001) toward corporate issues? 3) Does media use affect conspiratorial publics' close-mindedness on corporate issues? We used survey data from customers of SK Telecom, the largest Korean wireless telecommunications operator (N=700), and examined the patterns of correlations and MANOVA analysis.

Results

The results indicate that those with higher conspiracy orientation (N=324) prefer Internet (Pearson-r coefficient: 0.251, p<.01) than mass media (0.101, p<.01) for their information seeking. That is, heavy users of news information tend to have greater conspiracism regardless of what type of media they use. Also, the conspiratorial publics with high conspiracy orientation who showed interest in the 2G service termination issue of SK Telecom (N=159) did not have hostile media perception but did have projection bias toward the issue. They perceived media and social opinions as similar to their own views about the issue (0.530, 0.699, p<.01) more prominently than the rest of the respondents (0.188, 0.610, p<.01). In the close-mindedness test, we ran MANOVA on the Internet and mass media user groups. Among the conspiratorial thinkers who are active toward the 2G issue, the heavy Internet user group showed more close-mindedness regarding information and solution searching than did the light users. Mass media use did not influence their close-mindedness.

Conclusion

These results suggest that methods of media use have a close relationship with lay publics' conspiratorial thinking. Conspiratorial publics who consume media contents heavily and investigate issues with high interest also slow their searches for alternative explanations or opinions. They even perceive that the social climate is on their side, discouraging self-exposure to further information. Our study on conspiratorial publics, their media use, and subsequent perceptual biases identifies new research problems in public relations and need for managerial strategy for conspiratorial thinking among lay publics.

Keywords: *Conspiracy theories, Conspiratorial Public, Consumer Skepticism, Media Effects*

Belt and Road Sentiment Index

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The Chinese government has launched the Belt and Road Initiative (B&RI), targeting to establish a foreign policy scheme that facilitates infrastructure and economic development through cooperation and risk avoidance. To date, 123 countries have participated in the B&R Initiative (Zhu, 2019). These countries, together, constitute two-third of world population and one-third of global GDP.

Since the implementation of B&RI, the public's sentiment is mixed due to participating countries' stakeholders are uncertain if unsure B&RI would benefit or disadvantage their own / countries' interests. B&R partner countries and companies when faced with information uncertainties can retort to the use of a proposed Belt and Road Sentiment Index to achieve information symmetry.

This study aims at conceptualizing the B&R sentiment construct as well as a B&R Sentiment Index to improve the information symmetry about B&R initiative among the partner countries. With enhanced information symmetry, with trustworthy information among the stakeholders, the sentiment index could be used as a tool for B&R partner countries to be prepared to enter into long-term trade relationships with China. This project can also assist the public and the media to report and disseminate information about B&RI. With enhanced public awareness, it allows the fourth estate to access information and improves the public knowledge of the myths of B&RI.

Literature Review

2.1 International News Flow Theory

International News Flow Theory (INFT) (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Ostgaard, 1965) mentioned the 12 laws governing the structure of foreign news (Table 1). From a country-oriented perspective, INFT comprised of factors such country size, perceived "elite-ness" of a country, and other factors including historical, geographical, economic size and cultural distances. Information flows include factors such as cultural exchanges, trade, migration and tourism between countries (Kim and Barnett, 1996; Segev, 2010, 2014, 2017; Shoemaker, 2006; Wu, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2007).

Galtung and Ruge advocate the additivity hypothesis (1965), whereby these 12 laws are required to act in tandem need to rather than independently to generate news worthiness. The additivity model is used to test the model of country salience by Grasland (2019), Segev (2010; 2014) and Wu (1998, 2000). Wallerstein's (1974) further developed it into a World System Theory (WST), whereby news interactions between countries are categorized in three

spheres; core, semi periphery, and periphery. In WST theory, core countries such as United States are the key players who will dictate the direction flow of information (Segev, 2016). Research supports news flow from the affluent and strong political power countries to the rest of the world (Guo and Vargo, 2017). Views are formulated from information reported in core countries' news media and social media platforms (Wanta, Golan and Lee, 2004).

2.2 Intermedia Agenda-setting Theory

In addition to INFT, McCombs and Shaw's agenda-setting theory (1972) suggests that the news reported by the media will "transfer" to the public and hereby influence the formation of public opinion. Agenda-setting theory is further expanded in an intermedia agenda-setting setting, whereby "elite" or "credible" media agencies such as *Associated Press* will set the agenda for less elite media outlets and extend to other media outlets such as television and radio (Reese and Danielian, 1989; McCombs, 2014; Protess and McCombs, 1991). Recent students extended the model to examine cross-national intermedia agenda-setting on how the news agenda of one country *transfers* to another Guo and Vargo (2017).

Non-traditional media follow a non-egalitarian information flow structure (Golan and Himelboim, 2015). Spokespersons such as political or partisan online news sites are now considered to have a stronger influence over traditional media on agenda-setting influence (Meraz, 2011; Vargo & Guo 2016).

This paper aimed at outlining the theories in development of the B&R sentiment index (BSRI), a multivariate construct.

Methodology

This project proposes to use computer-assisted big data gathering techniques to crawl the infor-

mation using computer-assisted analysis (Guo and Vargo, 2017) by combing an open source database, Global Data on Events, Location and Tone - GDELT Translingual (GDELT, 2019). GDELT provides real-time news monitoring in 65 languages with 98.4% of the daily non-English news translated into English (GDELT, 2019). To measure Galtung and Ruge (1965) twelve laws, a total score using multiple regression model (Grasland, 2019) will be used based on Peterson's (1981) approach.

To determine whether news source are from core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral countries, studies by Babones (2005), Chase-Dunn, Kawana, and Brewer (2000), and Guo and Vargo (2017) list is adopted. The list would be updated by adding the B&R countries to form a comprehensive view of the definition of countries mentioned in international news flow literature. As we predict core countries set the agenda to semi-periphery and periphery countries, we use the Guo and Vargo's (2017) media agenda-setting operationalization method by using the Granger causality test. The amount of issues a country caused another countries' media agendas would be used to examine the country's agenda-setting power.

Finally, to include emerging online news agenda-setting power in the BRI sentiment index (Meraz, 2011; Vargo and Guo, 2016), Vargo and Guo's (2016) Granger causality test where ordinary least squares regression (OLS) model is used to regress between emerging online media and traditional media to determine the causality in intermedia agenda-setting relationships at different time-lags.

Results, conclusions, practical and social implications

The findings from this study aims at developing and operatizing the B&RI sentiment index aims at developing a multidimensional multilevel construct to determine the sentiment level of

different types of stakeholders in B&R countries to improve information symmetry and increase cross-border cultural, trade, tourism flows between B&R participating countries.

Keywords: *Belt & Road Sentiment Index, International News Flow Theory, Intermedia Agenda-setting Theory, Two-way symmetrical Model, GDELT*

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The effect of geniuineness on public engagement - An exploratory study in the communication of Chinese social media influencers in Pediatrics

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Chinese president Xi has put health at the center of the country's policy-making agenda, following "the Healthy China 2030 Planning Outline". This document is the first long-term strategic plan of health developed at the national level. One of the aims is to enhance children's health by the construction of Pediatrics. Concerning this great emphasis, sustainable efforts have been put into relevant fields especially in online area. A growing need for public to acquire child health information with pediatricians through social media is witnessed in China. The effective communication between pediatricians and the public is essential given the influential role of pediatricians in facilitating children's health. In the health-care field, genuineness was viewed as a contributing factor in effective medical communication and fundamental in the formation of a working alliance (Knight, 2009). However, scant study examined the relationship between genuineness and its effect on public engagement in Chinese social media discourse, especially in online pediatricians communication. Public engagement is important because it reflects the public's attitude and further affects their trust and relationship with involved members. This paper explored the effect of genuineness on public engagement in the communication of Chinese social media influencers in Pediatrics (SMIP) to provide insights to pediatricians to engage the public online and contribute to the formation of high-quality health information.

Theoretical approach

The common definition of genuineness refers to honesty, transparency and authenticity of one's mind and behavior, and concerns, understanding and support for other people. Owing to the absence of concrete operational dimension in studying genuineness, we developed a four-dimension framework for measuring genuineness in online discourse. The first two dimensions viz. self-disclosure and genuine response are built on prior researches in doctor-patient communication while the functional interactivity is developed from dialogic communication in public relations. Building on intercultural theory, the last dimension emphasizes the expression of genuineness in Chinese culture.

Methodology

Sample selection

We used the keywords of "Pediatrician" with the label of "V-users" to identify the verified doctors in Weibo. Weibo has been considered as one of the most influential platforms to spread health information with 462 million active online users in China. Then we employed a self-developed python program to identify the top 10 pediatricians based on their number of followers on March 1st, 2019. These online pediatricians were coined as "social media influencers in Pediatrics (SMIP)" in our study as they played an important role in informing public opinion and impacting the spread of information.

Data collection

We further scrutinized the number of posts published by these top 10 SMIP for six months (from Mar 1 to Aug 31, 2019) to ensure they were active communicators online. To harvest a sample size representing the target population, we employed the sample size calculator developed by the Australian Statistics Bureau to estimate a sample size of 300 with a confidence level of 95%, a confident interval of 0.056 and standard error of 0.029. We randomly sampled 30 posts from each SMIP's account for content analysis.

Coding scheme and procedure

Content analysis is employed to examine the four dimensions of genuineness adopted in the 300 posts of 10 SMIP. Coding schemes were developed based on the previous studies. For the evaluation of public engagement, the number of shares, likes, comments, and positive comments were identified as they were the most common and basic form of engagement indexes in social media (Men et al., 2018).

Dimension	Brief elaboration
Self-disclosure	-Referring to being willing to intentionally reveal personal feelings, opinions, thoughts, feelings, experiences, facts, values, skills and knowledge (Yalom, 2002). -It was viewed as positive interventions of genuineness on the medical therapy (J. Geller, 2003).
Genuine response	-Involving with the physician's reaction through emotional support, advice sharing and understanding for other individuals questions and comments (Bottorff et al., 1995). -It was identified as relevance with genuineness in medical communication (Van, Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2015).
Functional interactivity	-Relating to dialogic internet principle from functional aspect (Men et al., 2018) in which "generation of return visits" "conservation of visitors" and "dialogic loop" were perceived necessary for genuine dialogic communication to happen (Taylor, Kent & White, 2001).
Expression of genuineness in the Chinese culture	-Typical lexicons revealing honesty and kindness, which were two primary elements associated with genuineness (Ray, 2011). -The expression of honesty and kindness of particular value to Chinese audience. -They are traditional moralities of Chinese nationalities and regarded as the basis of the making of a man (Bai-cai, 2008).

Table 1: Brief elaboration on how the framework of genuineness is developed

	Pediatrician	Total no. of posts (in six months)	Average post/ days
1.	崔玉濤	368	2
2.	蝦米媽咪	430	2.336956522
3.	鮑秀蘭診室	5160	28.04347826
4.	張思萊醫師	12915	70.19021739
5.	小兒外科裴醫生	759	4.125
6.	醫生媽媽歐茜	688	3.739130435
7.	兒童營養師劉長偉	523	2.842391304
8.	兒科醫生雨滴	2661	14.46195652
9.	兒科醫生魚小南	436	2.369565217
10.	張亞停醫生	1580	8.586956522

Table 2: Top 10 SMIP in Sina weibo and total number of their postings

Results and conclusions

The findings indicated genuine responses was positively associated with comments and positive comments while negatively related to shares. Likewise, functional interactivity was found in positive association with shares, whereas negative correlation with comments and positive comments. Besides, expression of genuineness in Chinese culture was positively related to the shares. Though significant differences in four dimensions of genuineness were witnessed, it was important to examine further the associations between the sub-categories resources of each dimension and public engagement indicators. By analyzing the sub-categories separately, the findings were as follows in Table 5.

Limitations

The genuineness dimensions studied in this work were limited to the description and interpretation of posts by ten SMIP from March 1st to August 31st on Weibo. Future studies could collect more extensive samples of data. Moreover, the other driving factors should also be considered to investigate what kinds of elements enhance public engagement.

Implication

This study is the first that contributes to the understanding of effect of genuineness on Chinese public engagement in the online communication of SMIP where insights from different disciplines are drawn in developing an integrated framework to measure genuineness in online health communication. Also, this study provides insights to pediatricians and other physicians on the dimension of genuineness to be employed when they attempt to engage the public in health conversations online. Moreover, Chinese government aims to improve the better-living society by spreading high-quality online health information. Therefore, this research will provide insights into the formation of such information and communication strategies that have positive impacts on the public's health awareness and better living society.

Keywords: *Pediatrics, Online Communication, Genuineness, Public Engagement*

Major dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Operational description
Self-disclosure	Disclosure of personal life	Share daily life
	Disclosure of personal thoughts, opinions, feelings and values	Uncover the views and attitudes towards something
	Disclosure of information in pediatrics	Share the content related to pediatrics and children's health
Genuine response	Consistency	Rephrase public's questions and concern
	Knowledge, skill, experience and treatment advice	Provide treatment advice with elaborations for public concerns; Provide medical knowledge and experience to raise public health awareness
	Facilitation of hopefulness	Express a sense of hope, e.g., "you can handle that", "no worries", "I can help you"
Functional Interactivity	Conservation of visitors and Generation of return visits	Link to the Pediatrician's clinic/organization/own Weibo page; Link to other social networks in which the Pediatrician is present; Link to other Weibo pages
	Dialogic loop	Reply by the Pediatrician to a user's comment on a post/comment thread; Multimedia (type: text, live chat, video, audio); Encourage more enquiry; Ask questions
Expression of genuineness in Chinese culture	Honesty	The words of details and explanation: for example, because, so, reasons, include; The words of insight: I think, I contend, I prefer; The words of modal verb: may, could, would, should; The words of objectivity: in fact, it is true, according to, on the basis of; The words of adverbs of degree: most of, many, sometimes, rather
	Kindness	The expression of care: is that okay, are you satisfied, is this clear for you; The expression of friendliness: hello, could you please, welcome; The expression of gratitude: thanks, appreciate it; The expression of blessing: wish you, no worries, everything will be fine; The expression of compliment: good question, you are right

Table 3: The major dimensions, sub-dimensions and operational description of coding schemes

Negative Binomial Regression Model Predicting Number of Public Engagement (N=300)

Predictor Variable	Share				Like				Comment				Positive comment			
	B	SE	EXP (B)	P	B	SE	EXP (B)	P	B	SE	EXP (B)	P	B	SE	EXP (B)	P
Self-disclosure	-0.037	0.048	0.964	0.436	0.029	0.050	1.030	0.561	0.068	0.037	1.070	0.066	0.014	0.034	1.014	0.683
Genuine response	-0.247	0.053	0.782	<0.001	0.038	0.049	1.039	0.433	0.296	0.041	1.344	<0.001	0.148	0.039	1.160	<0.001
Functional interactivity	0.180	0.046	1.198	0.041	0.015	0.041	1.015	0.709	-0.158	0.036	0.854	<0.001	-0.090	0.036	0.914	0.011
Expression of genuineness in Chinese culture	0.115	0.039	1.122	0.004	0.064	0.039	1.067	0.100	-0.007	0.031	0.993	0.816	0.052	0.029	1.054	0.068

Table 4: Results of associations between four dimensions of genuineness and public engagement

Predictor Variable	Share				Like				Comment				Positive comment			
	B	SE	EXP (B)	P	B	SE	EXP (B)	P	B	SE	EXP (B)	P	B	SE	EXP (B)	P
Self-disclosure																
Disclosure of personal life	0.209	0.071	1.232	0.003	0.229	0.063	1.257	<0.001	-0.083	0.066	0.921	0.209	0.055	0.066	1.057	0.399
Disclosure of personal thoughts, opinions, feelings and values	-0.068	0.086	0.935	0.433	-0.016	0.079	0.984	0.841	-0.083	0.057	0.890	0.033	-0.084	0.065	0.919	0.193
Disclosure of information in pediatrics	0.125	0.042	1.133	0.005	0.017	0.033	1.017	0.617	-0.036	0.031	0.965	0.236	0.003	0.028	1.002	0.923
Genuine response																
Consistency	-0.189	0.115	0.828	0.102	0.338	0.094	1.402	<0.001	0.458	0.101	1.581	<0.001	0.298	0.088	1.347	<0.001
Knowledge,skill,experience and treatment advice	-0.145	0.081	0.865	0.075	0.039	0.060	1.039	0.518	0.294	0.067	1.342	<0.001	0.153	0.062	1.166	0.013
Facilitation of hopefulness	-0.598	0.178	0.550	0.001	-0.298	0.131	0.742	0.023	0.035	0.146	1.036	0.810	-0.073	0.130	0.929	0.572
Functional Interactivity																
Conservation of visitors and Generation of return visits	0.354	0.103	1.425	0.001	0.197	0.083	1.218	0.018	-0.194	0.083	0.824	0.019	-0.032	0.069	0.969	0.645
Dialogic loop	0.078	0.074	1.018	0.299	-0.004	0.053	0.996	0.935	-0.170	0.060	0.844	0.005	-0.132	0.055	0.876	0.015
Expression of genuineness in Chinese culture																
Honesty	0.147	0.046	1.158	0.001	0.100	0.028	1.106	<0.001	0.039	0.038	1.039	0.310	0.068	0.025	1.070	0.007
Kindness	0.047	0.116	1.048	0.685	-0.005	0.088	0.995	0.953	-0.119	0.093	0.888	0.201	0.053	0.069	1.055	0.439

A Holistic Model of Institutional Public Diplomacy and Foreign Correspondents: Israel as a Case Study

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Since its inception, the State of Israel has been struggling to advocate its complex and controversial foreign policy to the international community. For many years it has been considered common wisdom among Israeli governments that the most effective way to achieve support among foreign audiences is to develop an effective public diplomacy (PD) mechanism (Cowan & Arsenault , 2008; Gilboa, 2006; Margolick, 2012). This is reflected in the academic literature as well. Israel's PD is mostly studied from the official institutions' perspectives, analyzing their public affairs, their strategic communication, methods and efforts, strategies and tactics.

Literature review

The literature survey reveals that a key component to better understanding Israel's public diplomacy is lacking: How are these PD efforts received and perceived by the media? Surprisingly, this absence in research is the case in other geographical areas as well (Cohen, 2009; Bourdon, 2015). Numerous studies focus on how states conduct their PD, while very limited research exists on how these efforts are been perceived by the media (Bruggemann, et. al., 2016; Dell'orto, 2013; Hachten & Scotton, 2015; McLaughlin, 2002,2016; Tumber & Webster, 2006.). The objectives of this research are twofold: a) to sug-gest a holistic empirical analysis of the relationship between the parties; b) to introduce "The Feedback model" for PD analysis, which takes both sides to consider in research**.**

Methodology

This study compares and contrasts the perceptions of foreign correspondents in Israel and officials from three Israeli PD institutions. Applying comparative analysis allows us to trace similarities and gaps in the ways the two sides perceive the Israeli advocacy mechanism. 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with both correspondents, and PD senior and minor personnel. The questions covered tactical and strategic aspects, as well as general perceptions of the roles that these institutions fulfill.

Results and conclusions

The findings indicate that on the tactical level, both similarities and gaps existed in the ways that the parties perceived the Israeli PD institutions. All officers were found prompting quick response, up-to-date information in different languages and using a broad range of technological tools. As for face-to-face meetings, significant gaps were found between the correspondents and the officials' perceptions. While the officials noted that they dedicated many resources to

face-to-face interactions, correspondents depicted several tactical weaknesses that exist in all three PD institutions: a lack of relevant forums for exchanging valuable information; absence of briefings with the Chief Commander of the IDF or other seniors and organizing tours that can be more relevant and efficient to their work. On the strategic level, there was a significant gap between the perceptions of the parties.

While many of the correspondents expressed their general appreciation of the public diplomacy personnel which frequently has to juggle in a very intense environment, wide gaps were detected in the ways the governmental entities' and the foreign correspondents perceived the motivations of these institutions. Officials claimed that despite complicated limitations they feel they manage to apply a two-way communication with the foreign correspondents. However, many of the foreign correspondent's interviewees perceived it quite differently. They claimed the relations between the parties was more of a one-way communication than a two-way dialogic platform, raising tough questions and receiving detailed answers. Discrepancies regarding the mismatch of providing valuable information to the reporters' and tailoring it to the specific needs of the correspondents, was also mentioned. Several correspondents depicted it is a "carrot and sticks" mechanism in which cooperative journalists, mainly from large Western media outlets, received access and tips, while (others) reporters were implicitly hinted that "punitive" measures exist for (fewer collaborators) reporters. While the three organizations perceived the relationships they had with the foreign correspondents as dialogic, the latter valued their efforts but criticized the one-way communication nature of these connections. The correspondents expressed their understanding that there are objective difficulties and unique security circumstances, but that these diplomatic actors should endeavor to take more risks, which can create dialogue even in intersections of a clear dispute between the parties.

Practical and social implications

This research suggests for the first time a holistic analysis of Israel's public diplomacy, demonstrating the importance of analyzing public diplomacy activities and the way they are received by the media. By applying a grounded theory approach, the study suggests a theoretical contribution and introduces "The Feedback Model". The model was derived from a specific case and the findings are limited to Israel. Moreover, the role of foreign correspondents is shifting dramatically due to advanced technology and is not the same everywhere. To validate the model, future research needs to expand the scope of cases analyzed, exploring diverse geopolitical arenas.

Keywords: *public diplomacy*; *foreign correspondents*; *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*; *IDF Spokesperson Unit*; *Government Press Office.*

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Importance of nation-branding for Ukraine – Challenges and opportunities

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Ukraine is the only country on European continent with an ongoing conflict. It suffers from either a nonexistent or negative public image abroad, reinforced by an aggressive disinformation campaign led by its biggest neighbor, the Russian Federation.

Myths and prejudices against Ukraine, an unknown country until recent scandals involving the US president, confirmed that very few people in North America ever heard about Ukraine. In Europe, Ukraine is more known for its oligarchs and quarrelling politicians, former Prime Minister Yulia Timoshenko and her stint in jail and two revolutions in space of twenty years. Since 2014, the image was reinforced by aggressive Russian propaganda and information warfare against Ukraine using key narratives of Ukraine being a failed state, revolution of Dignity/Euro-Maidan being a West-back coup d'etat, a country led by fascist, anti-semitic and far right groups. Ukraine matters for many reasons – geopolitical and political, economic and social. It is therefore a prime example of a country in a need of a strong nation branding strategy and campaign.

After the revolution of Dignity in 2014, Ukrainian successive governments and civil society understood the importance of a strong soft power push and for a need to build a positive image abroad. Several initiatives were launched since 2014 with limited success. Ukraine still lacks behind in all major nation branding indexes and needs to adopt a strong and long-term strategy which goes beyond pure advertising and PR techniques.

What the initiatives and campaigns of the former government of President Poroshenko failed to address is to build a strong narrative about importance of a successful and prosperous Ukraine which is good both for the region and for the larger world. This narrative needs to be built against the long-term goal of building a country that is attractive to visit, to study in, to invest in and to invite to all important strategic geopolitical structures such as the European Union or NATO for example. To achieve this, Ukraine needs to become serious about its reforms, its willingness to shake off of its past twenty five years of misdeeds and corruption by a small but influential political class and be smart about communicating its achievements abroad.

There are many successful examples of nation branding in the world. The one which stands out is that of Singapore which has successfully branded itself over five decades in a government led strategy of a state-city always on the edge of innovation and openness. Whilst the comparison of small Singapore with one of the largest countries in Europe might be odd at first glance, it offers some useful lessons learned for Ukraine.

The methodology and resources used will be mainly secondary sources citing from well-known nation branding authors such as Simon Anholt's article Nation Brands of 21st century, his Nation brand index, Nicholas Cull's Public diplomacy – Foundations for engagement

in Digital era and Koh Buck Song's Brand Singapore monograph. The Ukrainian initiatives, campaigns and other ongoing activities in the area of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and PR campaigns to attract investment will be described by using local Ukrainian government and media sources.

One of the keys to Singapore's success lies in the long-term vision of its government to make Singapore a hub of modernity and innovation. This goal was steadily pursued for decades in a coordinated manner across all government bodies and is underpinned by the Singaporean business and art community.

By comparing the key lessons learned from Singaporean nation branding with the Ukrainian initiatives to date, the recommendations will focus on analyzing key principles of building a strong and sustainable nation branding strategy for Ukraine which based on four key principles:

1. Continue adopting difficult but necessary reforms with clear and real results.;

2. Long-term and sustainable strategy going beyond one political cycle of five years;

3. Government-led strategy that unites all governmental units together with non-governmental and business sector

4. Creating a strong narrative for Ukraine.

Ukraine and Ukrainian people deserve to live in a peaceful and prosperous country that is well perceived abroad, can attract the necessary investment and achieve its goal of European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Keywords: *soft power, nation branding, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, narratives*

Doing "Good PR" Online: Understanding social media use in Québec PR work

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Social media have now become an integral part of contemporary media landscapes and, as such, of PR work. However, still few studies have built on sociotechnical perspectives to better understand what practitioners *are doing with* social media. Building on the analysis of social media use in the field of Québec PR, this communication aims to contribute to shedding light on how, through their daily uses and representations of social media, PR practitioners are enacting plural normative frames, thus contributing to the weaving of our online environments.

Literature review

PR has shown a vivid and continuing interest towards Web technologies, with research on applications and perceptions of social media flourishing in recent years. Keeping with established paradigms, these technologies have been considered mostly from instrumental and managerial perspectives, with a strong focus on dialogue and symmetrical communication, despite persisting evidence of ambiguities between these normative ideals and logic of control or influence. Yet, with some notable exceptions, PR research is still to engage with some of the main perspectives and debates emerging from Internet studies and while a "sociocultural turn" has also furthered our understanding of how the practice is embedded in wider cultural and social dynamics, still little attention has been paid to the sociotechnical mediations that give shape to the practice. Conversely, Internet research has been mostly interested in so-called "ordinary" users. In this context, much is left to be understood about what PR practitioners are doing on a daily basis with social media and the normative frames they enact.

Methodology

Our analysis is based on the results of a multi-method qualitative "thick data" research conducted within the field of Québec PR. In addition to content analysis and participant observations of professional events and materials, our study followed 10 participants, who had various experiences of PR work and social media use, through a 3-step protocol. We first conducted in-depth interviews, then performed cross platform online observation for a period of 4 to 6 weeks, depending on the level of activity and saturation, and met for feedback interviews. Following the sociology of uses sociotechnical approach, our study aimed at understanding what Québec PR practitioners are doing with social media, drawing attention to the interplays between technological affordances and materiality; social environments; and micro-individual realities.

Results and Conclusions

Our results show how PR practitioners' use of various social media platforms are embedded in daily routines associated to a variety of commitments, interweaving personal and professional

online presences. While following clear patterns, these routines were fragile, showing breaks and changes that feedback interviews revealed to be related to such things as a colleague's illness or a change in employment.

Our analysis also shed light on the plural and overlapping normative frames associated with social media uses. In addition to repertoires associated with public information, professional responsibility and strategic performance, the "good use" of social media is also defined in relation to technological standards, platform affordances and social Web industries' promotional material intended for communication professionals. Other normative frames, echoing both the "Web 2.0" promise and its pitfalls, were related to the mastering of a "style" and "art of online conversation", various degrees of participation and contribution to online "communities", and the rules or netiquette needed to manage online crowds.

These results give us a better understanding of normative frames associated to online PR beyond the unidirectional/bidirectional or dialogical dichotomy, and how these are enacted in relation to sociotechnical mediations. Our research showed evidence of dynamics in which social media are part of communication industries for which PR practitioners are important

stakeholders contributing, through their use and representations of social media, to both the normative and economic valuation of online participation characteristic of informational capitalism.

While the scope of our results is limited by the sample size of our study, it nevertheless demonstrates the potential of thick data analysis combining offline and online methods across platforms for understanding PR uses of social media by going "underneath" traces of online activity and organizational presence. It also opens promising avenues for exploring how PR practice is enacted through the sociotechnical mediation of Web technologies and, at the micro-level, the hiccups, routines and realities of "ordinary work".

Practical and social implications

By making more explicit the overlapping of plural normative frames and the part PR plays in the valuation of participation, our analysis provides practitioners insights that can help them develop their ethical reflexivity about their use of Web platforms – and other emergent technologies, such as AI. It also contributes to give the public a better understanding of PR work and the part it plays in shaping our online environments.

Keywords: *social media uses*; *sociotechnical mediation*; *normative frames*; *Québec PR*

Exploring Millenials' perception and trust towards online external advocates

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Recent empirical researches in public relations and corporate communication field focused on trust have emphasized the relevance of the source of information compared to the importance attributed to the content: external and alternative advocates like experts, top management, employees are more trusted than professional communication and public relations practitioners by the general public (Zerfass et al., 2019; TICS, 2019). According to these researches, it seems to emerge a general call for the need to explore the role that external advocates could play in the organizational trust-building process. Additionally, within this communicative scenario, social media have empowered external advocates by providing them with a fertile ground where to develop trustworthiness with different publics (Saxton et al., 2015). As social media have traditionally been defined as "the local TV of the Millennial generation" (Mitchell et al., 2015, p.1) where Millennials search for and find information, this study intends to explore how Millennials perceive and trust external advocates such as experts and employees who share their recommendations online and how such external advocates are perceived by them compared to online influencers.

Literature review

This study implements a multidisciplinary approach. The perceived trust towards external advocates will be explored by taking into account the trust literature according to which trust can be intended as "the willingness of a trustor to be vulnerable to the actions of a trustee based on the expectation that the trustee will perform a particular action" (Colquitt et al., 2007, p. 909). Additionally Millennials' perceptions towards online external advocates compared to influencers will be analyzed by using extant studies on para-social interaction relationships (Rubin McHugh, 1987), according to which it is possible to investigate how media users perceive their relationship with media personalities.

Methodology

A two-step research design will be implemented by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. A quantitative survey will be implemented for collecting information about Millennials, their attitudes to rely on online recommendation by external advocates and influencers, their habit to share opinion online and their perceptions about the role of external advocates such as experts and employees. Then a focus group will be conducted in order to explore the topic more in details.

Results and conclusions

Millennials seem to have different perceptions towards external advocates and online influencers and such differences could impact their willingness to trust them and to follow their recommendations. Understanding their point of view could be helpful for communication and PR professionals who need to develop knowledge about the social media environment and the active role that external advocates could have for Millennials.

Practical and social implications

This study contributes to the research stream of research focused on the role of external advocates, by providing an overview concerning the Millennials' perceptions, attitudes and communicative behaviors towards them and the external advocates' impact on the organizational trust-building process. Results from the study will be useful to communication and PR professionals who deal with online communication strategies and tactics to enhance the management of online relationships with such alternative advocates.

Keywords: *External Advocates, Digital Trustworthiness, Millennials generation*

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Who needs public relations? A comparative analysis of two countries over public relations consultancy agencies

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The increase in public relations activities of corporations in the US and Europe have led to the proliferation of consultancy agencies. Upon the fact that Bernays was giving similar services in the 1920s or after John W. Hill founded his own agency in 1927 (Miller, 1999), public relations consultancies increased in number and became able to meet various needs of their clients. However, economic turmoils give rise to cuts of public relations budgets being the ones given up by corporations primarily. Corporations often prefer to invest in advertising efforts over public relations efforts whose outcomes become visible in the longer run. Corporations prefer to hire a public relations consultancy agency more frequently than the cases in which they prefer to employ their own in-house public relations department. They usually opt for cooperating more than one agency as per their area of expertise. The main objective of this study to examine closely Turkish and Slovenian public relations consultancies, reveal their structures and evaluate their clients as well as their areas.

Literature Review

Research on public relations consultancy agencies is limited. A research by Sriramesh and Vercic in 2007 on global public relations consultancies is one of the major ones. Others include a research by Schauster and Neil (2017) on ethical situations at advertising and public relations agencies, a paper on public relations agencies within the progress of public relations discipline in respective countries (Wu and Taylor, 2003), a research on how consultancies respond to widespread digital trends (Triantafillidou and Yannas, 2014) and the one in which public relations practices under specific conditions are addressed (Erzikova and Bowen, 2019).

Methodology

This paper is based on the research by Wirtz and Ngondo (2013) on the website strategies of top fee-generating US-based public relations agencies and the research by Ki and Kim (2010) on ethics statements of public relations firms. Clients of top Turkish and Slovenian public relations agencies will be analyzed to query the following points in terms of both clients to which they render services, and their own organization / employees.

Points to consider in terms of characteristics of clients to which public relations consultancy agencies render service:

- Industry of clients

- Clients' scope i.e. national or international

- A comparison between clients to see whether they hire more than one agency or not.

Points to consider in terms of inner organization of public relations consultancies:

- How many employees work in which position

- Whether communication with these employees is available or not

- Gender distribution

- How they define and promote themselves

- Ethical approaches of agencies

- Whether agencies are part of an international network or not (e.g. WPP)

All these points will be addressed based on data they made available on their web sites.

Results and conclusion

The main purpose of this study is to make a situation determination of public relations consultancies in both countries and evaluate their actual clients to examine closely the execution dimension of public relations profession in both countries.

Practical and Social Implications

This paper seeks to reveal a situation determination by detecting whether the "ideal" public relations activities addressed in literature are realized or not within the organizational framework of consultancies and services rendered in both countries.

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Public Relations for Public Relations Professionals: Relationship Management of Public Relations Professionals

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Public relations functions to build and maintain the organizations' relationships with its publics. The relationship is important in the sense that relationships can enhance and constraint an organization's existence. The relationship concept provides a framework for what public relations should do and it is not only limited to the organization itself, but must cover the well-being of the society as well. The suggested study is an attempt to understand how relationship is formed, maintained and evaluated between a public relations professional and its publics. How does the relationship building/management work, when this time, it is not for the organization, but for the public relations professional for herself/himself? The aim of this study is to come up with relationship management and personal branding practices of public relations professionals. It is expected from public relations professionals to be the agents of relationship management, to create positive perceptions on behalf of their clients, and to manage the social media. This study attempts to look at how they accomplish these on their behalf.

Literature Review

The many definitions of public relations highlight the relationship building between an organization and its publics. Public relations creates interactions for organizations and in this role has to be neutral so that they do not lose its multi-stakeholder perspective (Gregory and Willis, 2013). Public relations people within the relationship building paradigm is engaged in many activities which can range from strategic planning to execution and assessment. From the organization point of view, establishing organization and public relationships are important and has been one of the important focuses of public relations, but how it is initiated, built and maintained is not yet clear (Rhee, 2004). Management of relationships is becoming more and more important in an era where multi-stakeholder perspectives can be heard on many platforms, real or even fake.

Methodology

The research aims to explore the relationship building and management efforts of public relations professionals. The exploratory research will take in two parts. Firstly, semi- structured interviews with public relations professionals in Turkey will be conducted. The sample consists of agency public relations professionals with ten or more years of experience and corporate public relations professionals with similar experience. The aim of this research is to find out how public relations professionals approach to their relationship building, what they do, and how they assess themselves. The second part of

the study will include an analysis of their social media presence, including Twitter and Instagram. This analysis will take into consideration specifically the *organizational*, *professional* and *personal* identity of the public relations professionals on these two platforms. Which aspect/s of identity is communicated? Is there a hybrid approach? What does this imply?

Results and Conclusion

The findings will help us to understand the motives of public relations professional for their own relationship management. It will also show which motives are more prominent on social media.

Limitations of the study

The study is using a qualitative method which allows us to get in-depth information about the study questions, but the results cannot be generalized.

Suggestions for future research

A survey can be conducted and the focus can be broader than social media; covering in general the relationship management of public relations professionals.

Practical and social implications

Public relations professionals is expected to focus on organization and public relationships, and this study may help to uncover similarities and differences between organization and public relationships and public relations professionals and his/her public relationships.

Keywords: *public relations professionals, relationship management, social media*

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Can a Profession which has a Negative Impression Contribute to Society? A Qualitative Research on Public Relations, Public Relations Ethics and its Contribution to Society

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Introduction and Literature Review

The Commission on Public Relations Education (2019) defines public relations ethics as a set of "a priori principles, beliefs and values that should be followed by all who engage in public relations practice." In fact, ethics and acting responibly in public relations provide a vital communication function that helps develop an understanding between organizations, countries and the world and ultimately reduce conflicts (Grunig, 1993: 138). Ethical consciousness should be part of organizations seeking long-term efficacy and striving to engage with their publics and stakeholders (Bowen, 2008: 272). Many public relations practitioners have faced decisions with ethical consequences at some point in their careers. Some of these dilemmas are about personal policies and personal conflicts with organizational norms; others point out the differences between the interests of the organization and the public interest (Boynton, 2002: 223). Wright (1989: 3-4) states that in the USA being ethical in public relations or not is often the voluntary choice of public relations practitioners. Among the common themes of critiques of public relations, it is mentioned that public relations does not have a clean history and that public relations is assumed to distort the truth. Power relationships in public relations and the power of corporations are also another ethical concern in public relations (Coombs and Holladay, 2007)

Methodology

In this study, semi-structured interviews with 30 people from different professions in Turkey will be conducted to identify their views and perceptions on the ethical aspects of public relations and its contribution to the society. With the data obtained in Turkey, the objective is to arrive to an ethical and theoretical framework for the public relations profession, for the public relations practice and its usefulness to society.

Results and Conclusion

The data obtained within the scope of this study is important in terms of determining how public relations is perceived by people from different professions. The in-depth data gathered from Turkey respondents will help us to come up with a picture about the perception of public relations. Thus, the study aims to contribute to the improvement of the negative aspects of public

relations and explain public relations profession correctly.

Limitations of the study

The data collection will be done using qualitative method and because of this, limited number of people will be reached.

Practical and social implications

The study will shed light to the perception of public relations profession and the data obtained will be important in several aspects; it will help us to see the status of the profession, evaluate the main ethical issues and its social contribution. It will also seek answers on how public relations practices could be ethical.

Suggestions for future research

In future, quantitative studies can be conducted. In addition to it, it is suggested that the research is repeated in different countries and thus comparisons can be made between the countries.

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Cultural Intelligence and Strategic Partnerships: Examining communications protocols in emerging markets

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Introduction

Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is an asset for organizations embarking on strategic partnerships. The ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds, build, and translate that relationship into one of mutual understanding is important. Managing across cultures is crucial due to global sourcing, global mobility, global marketing, and global wisdom and collaboration (Solomon & Schell, 2009, p. 12). From North America to Europe, Australia, Asia, and Africa, business initiatives have spanned across borders. Cultural Intelligence in today's diverse work place is a skill for the tool box of management executives and all employees.

Research problem

What are the communications protocols an organization should be aware of and adapt, to ensure success in its partnership ventures abroad?

Research Methodology

In-depth interviews with nine executives and business professors provided qualitative results. A detailed content analysis of new markets and brand expansion articles from samples of 2015 and 2016 issues of business publications- *Canadian Business* and *Bloomberg Business*, provided quantitative results. Research was conducted from June 2016 - February 2017.

Literature review

Cultural Intelligence

Building a cross cultural relationship takes time and needs two-way communication to establish trust and mutual understanding. Cultural Intelligence is needed for today's executive to function globally and effectively and is also related to the concept of emotional intelligence as both share a "propensity to suspend judgment-to think before acting," according to psychologist, Daniel Goleman (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004, p.1).

It is impossible to master all cultures, however, one should have some basic knowledge of how to integrate and function in a culturally diverse landscape especially for business. Livermore (2010) notes the four step cycle of cultural intelligence, "CQ: Drive-motivation, CQ: Knowledge-cultural knowledge, CQ: Strategy-Plans or initiatives, and CQ: Action-Behaviours needed to adapt and function effectively (p.4). Also crucial is what Kingston (2012) debates about today's leadership skills, "They demand a combination of cultural dexterity, curiosity about the country, and sensitivity to working with partners in government," (p.1). A global leader's tool kit needs a stash of cultural intelligence.

Strategic Partnerships

It is the coming together of people or enterprises in a symbiotic relationship where each benefits over time (Storm, 2009). Businesses and people making a huge impact in the world are not going solo; they have come to understand the formidable force of strategic liaisons because two or multiple good heads are better than one. Strategic partnership takes time to identify and build. It often means moving "slowly" but strategically says IMAX CEO, Gelfond Richard.

Results and Conclusions

Communicators gain Cultural Intelligence by educating themselves on emerging markets, studying, and meeting with ethnic communities at home before embarking on strategic partnerships abroad. Travelling and immersion in a new culture through interaction with the locals is crucial for trust in long term relationships.

Research on political power in the region to understand the decision making process and management is structure is paramount for affect communication channels for key stakeholders. Is leadership egalitarian or hierarchical?

Research on Internet penetration in the region is important to avoid wasting resources on websites and social media. What media platforms are predominant in the region? Newspapers, radio, cell phone SMS (Texts), chats etc. Most emerging regions prefer face-to face communications to build trust in the initial stages of the relationship.

For effective communications in cross cultural partnerships, language is an asset. A local talent on staff or a skilled international team member is invaluable for crisis communication and navigating sensitive issues.

Practical and Social Implications

Public relations professional should be open minded, willing to participate, and be trained in cross cultural relationships. Mergers, global acquisitions, trade agreements, and exploration of new markets are opening doors for product development, managing relationships, and mitigating issues during crisis. By understanding the cultural landscape and effective communications channels with various stakeholders, information is disseminated and managed in the new work space. Experts interviewed agreed that the role of communications in helping to broker, foster, and maintain relationships relied greatly on knowledge and use of local communication channels. It is not one- size-fits all approach, but one that is adaptive and flexible within the cultural landscape.

Limitations

Recruiting participants in the research was a challenge. Out of about 40 global executives and academics contacted, only nine agreed to participate. This is a small sample which does not represent the diverse business partnerships that exists globally.

Limited time and resources to travel to a new environment, be immersed in the culture and conduct more in-depth interviews.

Future study

The convergence of communication and culture and how it can be leveraged to strengthen the role of public relations practitioners.

A case study model with an organization over a period of time to monitor and measure cultural intelligence and its impact on partnerships.

Keywords: *Cultural intelligence, Strategic partnerships, strategic communications, emerging markets, cross-cultural ventures.*

Networked Campaigning. Mobilizing in the age of transformation

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Introduction and purpose of the study

In general, the body of knowledge that deals with mobilization widely neglects the role of communication management. That also counts vice versa: communication management and PR literature does not discuss its role in organizing civil society. But keeping in mind the vast changes of the public sphere and the conditions of mobilization we ask how a small or relatively young civil society initiative might achieve its communication goals in the age of transformation. In our conceptional paper we suggest networked campaigning as a way to achieve public perception.

Literature review

In a digitalized public sphere, we take networked publics (Boyd 2010; Friedland et al. 2006) as a given scenario and assume that in a fragmented perception well established actors enjoy preferred access to public forums. And since we live under conditions of "Power-law" (Neuberger et al. 2009) where public appearance and perception might be more important than actual deliberation the chance to participate in political deliberation is more and more dependent on the medialization of interest in a public sphere that is built spontaneously and only last short-term.

Methodology

In this conceptional paper we argue that a digitalized public sphere is depending on relational networks (Donati 2011; Chadwick 2013) that focus on ties and interrelations rather than the knots of the network. In these networks, weak ties (Granoveter 1973) become increasingly important since the acceptance of traditional institutions and the willingness to engage oneself on a permanent basis (e.g. as a member) is in decline. Therefore, we assume that individuals engage in multiple, fast changing networks (networked individualism; Rainie & Wellmann 2014).

Results and conclusions

As a result, we propose a concept that we call "networked campaigning" which is designed to conform with the above-mentioned scenario. In line with Liacas & Mogus (2016) we believe that networked campaigns need a compelling cause (1) and is dependent on cross movement network hubs (2). It is open to grass-roots power (3) – but where Liacas & Mogus (2016) still use the traditional control paradigm they label as "focus and discipline" (4) we suggest a co-cre-

ative and agile approach as a valid alternative not only in conducting campaigns (Botan 2018) but also to define and refine the cause and focus of the campaign.

Practical and social implications

In a world of information overflow Networked Campaigning is meant as a concept for new and small organizations or social movements to cope with the mentioned power law (Neuberger et al. 2009) in the public sphere. Networked campaigning is similar to strategies we can observe at movements like XR – it es an approach to focus attention by bringing together organizations with similar communication objectives. In contrast to other approaches to campaigning, however, this does not take place through control by a central entity, but through the use of networking and the openness that network partners evolve the messages of the campaign through adaptation and iteration and carry them into their networks.

Keywords: *Mobilizing, campaigning theory, networked public, relational sociology, networked individualism*

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Internal Communication as a strategic function in organizations: Proposal for a Best Practices Guide in Internal Communication

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Introduction and Purpose of the Study

The current context is characterized by high dynamism, competitiveness and uncertainty, consequently creating new challenges for organizations, in terms of not only business but also regarding the relationship management with employees.

The paradigm has changed, and organizations are facing a new employee profile, who is not looking for a job for life, but professional development, recognition and new experiences. Therefore, the employee is no longer seen as a number, but is perceived as a person, with unique values, expectations, needs and skills. Consequently, organizations began to look more inwardly, showing greater concern for their employees and their contribution for organizational reputation.

In this sense, it is necessary to know the reality of organizations and understand their vision on internal communication and the way the function is managed, drawing useful resources and knowledge that can contribute to its development.

The main goal is to present a proposal for a Best Practices Guide that can contribute to increase knowledge about internal communication and help its professionals to improve or introduce the function in organizations.

Literature Review

Within the scope of this investigation, internal communication is placed as one of Public Relations (PR) areas, understood as a strategic function that combines philosophies, values, purposes, people, meanings, channels and practices. It is a decisive element in organizations, acting as an agent of change and promoting internal cohesion (Men & Bowen, 2017; Brandão, 2018). The purpose of internal communication is to inform, engage and connect employees, aligning them with the organization. PR emphasizes the strategic and multidisciplinary nature of internal communication, arguing that it is the function responsible for the strategic management of relationships and interactions within the organization at all levels, contributing to employee's commitment and engagement, as well as to the achievement of business goals and organizational success.

Methodology

The Best Practices Guide was built from a lite-rature review and face-to-face interviews with Portuguese organizations from different sectors - consulting, aeronautical industry, retail, air transport, Portuguese Armed Forced, third sector (consumer protection) and energy - that shared their vision and experience regarding internal communication. One of the founding members of The Internal Communication and Corporate Identity Observatory (OCI), which has contributed to the development of internal communication, was also interviewed. The collected data were analyzed through a Qualitative Content Analysis. In order to give more support to the interpretation of the results, an accounting of the coding units was also carried out.

Results and Conclusion

This research has allowed to understand that each organization is unique, as well as its way of managing internal communication, which is influenced by several factors such as the activity sector, organizational structure and culture, leadership style, size and business strategy. Although some common elements can be found between the organizations, these factors will create special conditions for internal communication that can hardly be replicated in other contexts. Despite the differences observed in organizations, the transformation process that society, people and business are going through are common to all of them.

Internal communication has been playing an important role, not only in helping organizations to be more flexible and to adapt to this new reality, but also in creating new spaces and forms of communication to face these changes. Even so, communication is still not one of the main prio-rities for organizations, lagging behind business areas and not being properly represented on the organizations boards.

Organizations have a practical view of internal communication, and therefore the way their professionals perceive and manage the function is related to the day-to-day experience, the strategic priorities and the profile of employees. Consequently, it was possible to observe significant differences between the organizations interviewed and to identify best practices in all of them.

Even though these best practices must be adapted to the context, dimension, strategy and purpose of each organization, they can make a difference in the results and effectiveness of internal communication.

Practical and social implications

This investigation contributes to clarify the Public Relations view about internal communication and to a greater knowledge of the function, namely its practical aspects and the crucial role it plays in the success of organizations. Likewise, the Best Practices Guide represents an approximation between the academy and the market, joining two distinct views, which complement each other.

It is expected that this Guide generate some discussion and reflection, not only on the internal communication itself, but also on the role that it can play during this transformation period that organizations are facing and which has been shaping their way of acting and working, as well as the relationship with their most important stakeholder: the employees.

Keywords: *Public Relations, Internal Communication, Employees, Strategy, Best Practices*

What Impact Can Internal Social Media PR Have on Organisational Culture? Results from three consecutive interview studies concerning internal social media within 500 German companies, 2013-2019

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Internal communication can undoubtedly have both a positive and negative impact on the culture of an organisation. It is also obvious that social media also plays a more and more important role within organisations. However, what is the exact impact that social media PR can have on organisational culture e. g. in a change situation? The paper proposed here wants to analyse these issues by focusing in particular on the question of how, and to what extent, trust, as one of the foundations of modern organisations, can be built and destroyed via internal social media PR. This will be done via a particularly long-term survey of up to 500 German companies.

Literature review

According to Niklas Luhmann (see 2014, pp. 27-37), trust can be understood sociologically as a "mechanism for reducing social complexity". Trust is therefore seen as a necessary basis for any cooperative action, something which specialist literature in both business management (see Dasgupta 1988: p. 49; Curall & Judge 1995; Meifert 2003: p. 303; Herger 2006: pp. 65-84) and organizational sociology (see e.g. Malik 2006: p. 149; Covey 2009, pp. 57-294) has addressed. In communication studies, Bentele (see 1994 and Bentele / Seidenglanz 2008) developed a "theory of public trust", while Hofann (see 2013, pp. 23-36), for example, dealt somewhat with the issue of trust in PR research. After all, according to Sao (2010, p. 4), "[b]uild[ing] trust" is one of the core aspects of social media in general.

However, all these approaches deal with trust primarily as an external communication issue and tend to take little account of it internally. This is regrettable, as internal communication is today mainly understood as an integrative part of holistic communication management (see Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002: p. 480). Particularly against a backdrop of increasing digitalization also in internal communication (see e.g. Chui et al. 2012: p. 47, Lee et al. 2013: p. 14, Smith & Mounter 2008, Huck & Sandhu 2016: p. 8), trust, as a communication issue, is becoming ever more important, especially via internal social media.

Methodology

For the paper proposed here, trust, as a framework for internal communication and internal social media, was examined in three successive survey studies, with Germany used as a sample country. The underlying survey studies were conducted in 2013, 2016 and 2019, in each case online in January, with 579, 555 and 352 respondents respectively. In all cases, the questionnaire link was issued to company representatives in the areas of communications, human resources and general management via address lists and editorial references.

Due to general problems in company studies with sampling and participation, this study is, unfortunately, also not representative; it does, however, illustrate a good selection of companies in the country being analysed, roughly corresponding to official statistics. Above all, however, it is most comparable in terms of development trends since there is a very similar composition of distributors and participants for all three surveys. Nevertheless, this is a limitation of the study and an even broader and more international approach to the subject would be suitable for the future.

Selected Results and Conclusions

One of many results shows that currently "only" 30 percent of those surveyed see a strong culture of trust as an important or very important basis for internal social media in companies; there is hardly any change vis-á-vis previous figures. However, there are clear developments when the question arises of what the reliable development of internal social media can foster: in a six-year comparison, the importance of and impact on flatter hierarchies increases by almost 13 percent, while the supporting role of clearer guidelines falls by 7 percent in the same period. Nowadays, internal (corporate) influencers are also given a much larger role in creating an internal culture of trust. At the same time, cross-hierarchical communication grows the most slowly in comparison to communication within the same level.

In summary, trust represents a condition precedent for successful internal communication: to function successfully as a company, one needs employees to not only trust in management decisions, but also for management to trust employees to act responsibly. If this happens, a positive development of trust, with and without internal social media, is possible for building a safe, sustainable and promising future for those organisations in which the internal communication concerned occurs.

Keywords: *Internal Social Media, Organisational Culture, Trust*

The impact of the PR department work quality on organizational culture

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Introduction and purpose of the study

The aim of this paper is to examine the influence of specific public relations dimensions on individual organizational culture dimensions. The paper also analyzes the moderating effects of the companies' ownership structure on the observed relationships.

Literature review

Research shows that the following can have positive effects on organizational culture: excellent leadership in public relations (Meng, 2014), open and clear communication within the organization (Schulz-Knappe, Koch, Beckert, 2019), and symmetrical internal communication (Men, Yue, 2019). Although a significant number of papers confirm the existence of the influence of various aspects of public relations on organizational culture, the impression is that there is not enough research to measure the direct effects of specific public relations dimensions on individual organizational culture dimensions.

Methodology

In order to achieve the research goal, it is necessary to simultaneously measure the public rela-
tions dimensions and the organizational culture dimensions. The dimensions of the PR department (office, section) work quality are observed as the independent variables, and the GLOBE dimensions of organizational culture as the dependent variables.

The questionnaire presented in the paper (Nikolić, Božić, Terek, Vlahović, Kavalić, 2020) was used to measure the quality of the work of the PR department in organizations. In short, the methodological procedure for forming this questionnaire consists of three phases:

1. Defining the initial items for the process. 56 items were created.

2. Exploratory factor analysis. The initial 56 items were reduced to 43 (in 7 factors).

3. Confirmatory factor analysis. The 43 items were reduced to 16 (in 5 factors).

The questionnaire consists of 5 dimensions and 16 items. The dimensions are: Ethical and Responsible Action, Proactive and Quality Performance, Strategic and Effective Action, Media Relations and Internal Public Relations. In the process of developing the questionnaire (two

questionnaires in phases II and III), experts evaluate **the importance** of the items, and later, in the process of applying the developed questionnaire, the **state** of the items constituting the newly formed questionnaire is evaluated. When applying the questionnaire (for the purposes of research in this paper), the respondents evaluated the **state** of the items on a seven point Likert scale.

The GLOBE project instrument was used for measuring organizational culture (House et al. 2004). The first part of the questionnaire was used (the state "how it is"). This questionnaire contains 34 items with a seven-point Likert scale. The instrument measures nine dimensions of organizational culture: Uncertainty Avoidance, Future Oriented, Power Distance, Institutional Collectivism, Humane Orientation, Performance Orientation, In-Group Collectivism, Gender Egalitarianism and Assertiveness.

The research was carried out in companies in Serbia where the respondents completed the questionnaires. The respondents included were PR managers, PR practitioners and marketing professionals. A total of 236 questionnaires were collected from 78 companies.

The data were processed by statistical methods: descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis and hierarchical regression analysis for examining the moderating effects.

Results and conclusions

The PR department work quality dimensions have a statistically significant effect on all of the organizational culture dimensions. The dimensions of Strategic and Effective Action and Ethical and Responsible Action have the strongest influence. The biggest impact is on the dimensions of Assertiveness, Performance Orientation and In-Group Collectivism. The Power Distance dimension has statistically significant and negative correlations with all of the PR department work quality dimensions. This means that the PR department has the potential to influence the reduction of power distance in organizations, especially in state-owned companies.

One of the limitations of the research is that it was conducted in Serbia. However, with a high degree of certainty, it can be assumed that similar relationships of the observed dimensions exist in other countries, especially in those countries with a similar degree of economic and social development. The proposal for further research is to examine the impact of the PR department work quality on leadership in the organization, the organizational commitment of employees, confidence at work, etc. It is possible to examine the impact of PR on national culture: the questions in the questionnaire would relate to PR department work quality at the national level, and the GLOBE national culture questionnaire would be used.

Practical and social implications

Continuous promotion of the work of the PR department, and in particular strategic and effective action and ethical and responsible action, creates the conditions for improving the organizational culture, including reducing the power distance. Leaders and PR managers need to be aware of these dependencies, as well as their role in these processes.

Keywords: *Public relations, PR department work quality, organizational culture, GLOBE, Serbia*

Finance, trust and Facebook: The public relations discourse of the Libra crypto currency project

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Introduction and purpose of the study

In June 2019, Facebook announced it was establishing a new subsidiary called Calibra that would introduce a digital payments platform using a new cryptocurrency called Libra. The Libra project was an attempt by Facebook to generate more profits from the connections and user profile information that it has gathered through its social network. The aim of this study is to analyse the promotional public relations discourse used by Facebook and other actors in support of the Libra digital currency project since June 2019. The project also investigates the argumentation against the Libra project, which included the risks of enabling fraudsters, drug dealers and terrorists. Regulators, central bankers, lawmakers and politicians used varied channels to make their case against the Libra project in the public sphere, including the French Finance Minister, Bruno Le Maire who wrote an opinion article in the *Financial Times*, to argue against Facebook's digital currency project on behalf of EU countries.

RQ: What were the modes of public relations discourse were deployed by the proposers and opponents of Facebook's Libra cryptocurrency project from June 2019 onwards?

Literature review

Financialization has been defined by Marazzi (2011, p. 26) as pervasiveness of the financial economy in society "that spreads across the entire economic cycle" funding cars, consumer goods and so on in a way that makes the financial services sector "co-substantial" with production. Financialization has not been much addressed in public relations and media literatures, although Bourne (2017, p.1) has asserted that one outcome of the "successive trust booms and busts in financial markets" is a new emphasis among public relations firms and professional associations on "trust as a pressing agenda for public relations"

Methodology

The study is based upon a content analysis of the organisational rhetoric deployed by various actors in the project,that in total formed the total public relations discourse associated with the launch of Facebook's Libra initiative in 2019. The author analysed varied communications outputs and materials – including press releases, opinion articles, press statements, white papers, promotional web pages - from Facebook and its Libra partners, as well as similar types of materials issued by those opposing the project, including the Bank of International Settlements in Basel, regulators and central banks.

Results and conclusions

The content analysis of publicity material led to

thematic categorization of Facebook's messaging. A primary message was of the corporate separation between Facebook and the Calibra consortium, in order to validate it as trustworthy - in the face of Facebook's issues with the handling of user data on its social network in 2018 and 2019. The second recurring message in Calibra's promotional material was the "empowerment" that the Libra digital currency could bring to the world's unbanked population, yet the imagery on the web site and publicity material clashed with that proposition in the way it portrayed global elite users rather than those with no access to bank accounts.

The public relations discourse from objectors centred explicitly on whether Facebook could be trusted in the financial sphere. There was evidence of cultural clash and misunderstanding by Facebook, which seems to have overextended itself and its ambition to exercise power equivalent to many central banks in seeking to create and handle money. There was also evidence of clashes between the technological rhetoric from Facebook on innovation versus the emphasis placed on security and fidelity by regulators and central banks.

Practical and social implications

The role of social networks in the spread of disinformation, the influence of digital media platforms in society and the power of leading providers such as Facebook requires that the public relations discourse that they use to promote their goals should be subject to close scrutiny.

The Libra project is a strategic move that could expand Facebook's scope, influence and power beyond the technology and social media sectors it has dominated for the past 15 years into finance. The clash between Facebook and lawmakers over the ambitions of the Libra project crystallised a culture clash between the technology-oriented messaging typified by Facebook's mantra of "move fast and break things" and the need for stability, conformance and fidelity in the international payments and banking sectors.

Keywords: *finance, digital finance, public relations, discourse*

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Internal communication satisfaction and employee engagement as determinants of the employer brand

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Introduction and purpose of the study

For modern organizations, attractiveness, profitability and future operations depend on their readiness to put employees and future employees first and recognize them as most important stakeholders to organizational development (Aggerholm, Andersen & Thomsen, 2011). The association of concepts such as internal communication satisfaction, engagement and employer branding is integral to this. If public relations experts want to manage organizational relationships, it is crucial to have a clear grasp of how internal communication satisfaction is related to engagement and how both, in turn, relate to employer brands. The main goal of the study was to contribute to the understanding of internal communication and its connections with engagement and employer brands. We wanted to test the relationship between the three variables and determine if employees' perception of employer brands is a result of their internal communication satisfaction and engagement.

Literature review

Internal communication is a part of the organizational context in which employees are engaged or disengaged (Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011). However, in public relations literature dealing with internal communications (and especially employee engagement) has been rather scarce (Tkalac Verčič, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2012). Additionally, very little attention has been given to employees' preferences of communication by their organization (Ruck & Welch, 2012). Welch (2011) gives a thorough overview of the link between engagement and internal communication and specifies that engagement is under the influence of internal communication. She states that internal communication has the potential to effectively transfer values of the organization onto all employees and involve them in organizational goals. This type of practice leads to engaged employees. On the other hand, another way of differentiating an organization from its competitors amongst potential employees is through the organizational employer brand. Employer brands help potential employees in understanding their future workplace. Employer branding can be defined as the 'sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work'. Ambler and Barrow (1996) defined it as 'the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company' (p. 187). In this study we explored the potential influences of internal communication satisfaction and engagement on employer brands.

Methodology

In order to answer the research question, we applied three predesigned measurement instruments, as a part of a larger communication survey, among 1524 employees from 10 large companies. The communication survey was a part of a four-year Croatian national scientific project to map out internal communication. The choice of organizations that were approached within the project was based on the typical unit criteria. In selecting the organizations for the sample the project team reached a consensus on what is considered typical and which criteria should be typical. Number of employees range from 300 up to 10 000. Within each company, significant effort was made to include representative samples of employees.

Results and conclusion

The results showed a significant connection among the three variables. Theoretically that implies that not only is there an important relationship between studied concepts, but that it is impossible to manage one without the other. For satisfied and engaged employees that perceive their employers brand as a good one, all three variables need to be developed and managed together.

Practical and social implications

The main practical implication of the study is to help organizations measure, manage and enhance their internal communication by strategically managing all of the studied concepts – internal communication satisfaction, employee engagement and employer brands.

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New realities of public relations and cyber security

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Literature review

We are all becoming more and more reliant on the internet and digital communication: "The internet and other digital technologies as well as its underlying network and information systems are the backbone of the European Society and the Digital Single Market." (ENISA, 2016, p. 5). This dependency of individuals and organizations is making us all vulnerable to cyber (in) security. Indeed, the World Economic Forum report on global risks revealed that cyber-attacks and data fraud or theft are two of top five risks CEOs are most likely to face (WEF, 2019). In the global business community cyber security is becoming a common nightmare. As a global insurance group wrote in its Small Business Cyber Risk Report: "Cyber attacks are the new normal" (Hiscox, 2018). Cyber security is defined as a set of guidelines, technologies and training that provide protection of an organisation's data and of its computer and digital communication infrastructure (c.f. Schatz, Bashroush & Wall, 2017).

Purpose and theory

The purpose of this investigation is to collect empirical evidence on how the public relations profession in Europe follow broader societal concerns about cybersecurity and map the impact of the profession on cybersecurity in organizations.

Methodology

In January and February 2020 2,324 PR practitioners from 44 European countries administered an on-line questionnaire in English language that was previously pre-tested.

Results and conclusions

There is a cyber security divide between Northern and Western Europe on one side (German professional agree with a statement that cyber security is a much debated topic in their country at 81.9%, in the UK at 80.0% and Denmark at 78.8%) and Southern and Eastern Europe on the other side (with only 20.0% of Croatian professionals agreeing with the same statement about their country, 25.5% in Serbia and 30.2% in Greece). The major concerns for communications departments and agencies in the field of cyber security are that cyber criminals could hack their website and/or social media accounts, close down their digital infrastructure, and to a lesser degree steal data about stakeholders or leak sensitive information. In reality, more than half (54.0%) communication practitioners in Europe experienced cyber attacks or incidents of data theft in their own organizations – joint stock companies and governmental organizations more often than private companies, non-profits or agencies (with statistically significant differences between countries). More than a quarter (27.4%) of organizations experienced multiple attacks, and nearly a half (45.0%) none. While a

business consultancy found that "[t]raining employees to think and act with security in mind is the most underfunded activity in cybersecurity budgets" (Accenture, 2019, p. 8), this opportunity is overlooked by public relations practitioners in Europe: while nearly half of them (45.5%) are often involved in handling cyber security crises and nearly a third of them (31.0%) address cyber security in internal communications, only a quarter of them are involved in employee cyber security education (26.0%) and even less in developing cyber security guidelines – although 90% of cybersecurity issues originate from human error or behavior, and almost never in the IT department (Kelly, 2017). Therefore, increasing cyber security literacy through education and implementing cyber security technologies (where only 17.7% of communication practitioners are involved) should be raised on the agenda of the profession. Since cybersecurity concerns also the integrity of content and not only of channels, it has important implications for positioning public relations professionals within organizations and their impact on organizational and societal wellbeing.

Keywords: *cybersecurity, public relations, positioning, competenca development,*

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Perceived organizational transparency as a multidimensional construct: Discovering its benefits and unintended consequences

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Public relations professionals seem to be convinced of a utopian transparency ideal. Increasingly, organizations are expected and pressured to disclose information to organizational members and external stakeholders. This is no surprise, given the auspicious outcomes that are reported in the literature. Negative consequences of transparency for employees are not fully understood in transparency research, and there is little knowledge about the consequences of the disclosure of particular types of information.

In this project, a multidimensional conceptualization of organizational transparency is proposed consisting of seven dimensions. Each dimension is measured by a theory-based scale. Finally, this study explores what content can instill job satisfaction and organizational trust upon disclosure.

Literature review

Prior research indicates a positive link between organizational transparency and employee performance. Transparency is seen as a way to empower employees and improve the quality and speed of decision-making. While transparency is usually defined as the disclosure of information, it is also a highly subjective concept as it refers to the extent that the information is deemed '*ac-curate, timely, balanced, and unequivocal*' (Rawlins, 2009, p. 75). Therefore, in this project, we treat transparency as a *perceptions* rather than behavior.

As the realization is growing that transparency should be treated as a multi- rather than unidimensional construct, it is no longer relevant to ask *to which extent* an organization is transparent, but *which information* an organization chooses to disclose. On the basis of out literature study, we distinguish transparency about (1) decisions & policies, (2) employee behavior monitoring, (3) board and management structures, (4) financial accounting, (5) investments, (6) employee efforts & rewards, and (7) salaries.

Methodology

A survey was deployed resulting in a convenience sample of 269 employees, working at least 8 hours a week for an employer. Freelancers and business owners were excluded. Seven dimensions of transparency perceptions were measured, as well as organizational trust and job satisfaction.

Results and conclusions

The findings revealed that transparency is not always related to positive outcomes, and can

even have negative consequences. Transparency in (1) decisions and policies and (2) employee behavior monitoring were positively related to job satisfaction. Both relationships were mediated by organizational trust. This supports the much-heard notion that employees are appreciates organizations that are open about topics that matter to them because this openness instills trust. However, transparency in (3) board and management structures, (4) financial accounting, (5) investments, and (6) employee efforts and rewards were not associated with job satisfaction or organizational trust. Not all topics appear to be important for employees and transparency in those fields do not affect employees much. Finally, the study showed that transparency in (7) salaries is negatively related to organizational trust. The disclosure of confidential information (such as the height of salaries) can harm organizational trust.

Practical and social implications

These findings indicate that, rather than uncritically pursuing the transparency-ideal, organizations need to get smarter about which information to disclose or withhold. The perceived disclosure of different types of information has very different effects on employees. First, it is very important that employees perceive the organization to be open about policies and decisions because such information can make (future) organizational behavior predictable, and can give employees insight into the aims and strategies of the organization. Such insight can generate organizational trust, which makes employees more satisfied with their jobs. Furthermore, organizations have an obligation to be open about the data the organization gathers about its employees. When organizations appear secretive about their employee monitoring programs, employees may feel like they are secretly being watched, which harms trust and satisfaction.

However, perceived transparency does not always translate in trust and satisfaction: some (perhaps more technical) information may require too much expertise and effort to make sense of, may raise new questions, or may contribute to information overload. Furthermore, employees may not always understand and appreciate the relevance of such information for their own situation. Finally, the disclosure of salary information can violate the trust in the employer because employees expect such information to remain confidential. A trust relationship also implies confidentiality about the arrangements between those parties.

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Immersive CSR? Exploring the Potential of Immersive Storytelling in Public Relations and CSR-Communication

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Introduction and purpose of the study

When asked about the most important technical developments for future society, Apple CEO Tim Cook just recently emphasized the potential of AR: "My view is it's the next big thing, and it will pervade our entire lives." (Burke, 2020). It's already been two decades of media practice since the concept of Augmented Reality has been introduced and precisely defined by Azuma (Azuma, 1997) and Milgram et al. (Milgram et al., 1995), but just recently there has been an increasing number of studies, ranging from *urban studies* (Burd, 2008; Manovich, 2006; Pranz et al., 2020), *media studies* (Caldera-Serrano & León-Moreno, 2016; Nielsen & Sheets, 2019; Ross, 2018; Rupp et al., 2016) to *journalism studies* (Aitamurto, 2019; Lewinski, 2018; Shin & Biocca, 2018).

In this paper, we focus on the potential immersive storytelling (IS) has for Public Relations in general, and for Corporate Social Responsibility communication in particular. Since, there is also expanding evidence, that the potential of CSR or sustainability communication is still underdeveloped.

Short literature review

Among the main barriers that communicators face in trying to convey the issue are the "lack of immediacy and direct experience", e.g. the long-term effects of climate change and its "complexity and uncertainty" (Wibeck, 2014). Another problem of making sustainability issues salient in public communication lies in its unseen and intangible character (Moser & Dilling, 2004). Therefore, laypeople seem to have difficulties understanding the underlying problems. (Sterman & Sweeney, 2007).

For organizational communication, which is being examined here in particular, further specific challenges are emerging. Not only are most customers and employees' laymen, but communication with these target groups primarily serves other goals than the ecological shift in attitude and behavior. Customers want efficient and credible information about products and services, employees want clear and precise information to fulfil their duties. The willingness and ability to go beyond this is not very well developed against the background of information overload and ever-increasing workloads. (Wagner, 2019).

Nevertheless, organizations are required to contribute to a more sustainable society (Ihlen, 2009; Averchenkova et.al., 2016). To engage and inspire customers and employees' new ways must be explored to win the fight for attention and to facilitate sensemaking processes (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995; Weick et.al., 2005; Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010; Morsing

& Schultz, 2006) in order to induce behavioral changes (Nijhof and Jeurrissen, 2006; van Vurren and Elving, 2008). It is here important to note that the natural medium of sensemaking is narrative (Taylor, 2009) – people must be emotionally engaged, enabled to narrate by themselves and among themselves.

On this background immersive media (Slater & Wilbur, 1997), such as Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality and 360-degree video, offer a special potential. In consideration of similar fields of application like journalism (Lewinski, 2018; Paíno Ambrosio & Rodríguez Fidalgo, 2019) or marketing (Jung et al., 2020), we assume that immersive storytelling has great potential in communicating complex topics like climate change (Neuberger, 2019) and could raise the level of user engagement (Shin & Biocca, 2018)

Methodology

In order to identify the potential of IS has for CSR Communication, we conducted a study that is based on two questions: (*RQ 1*) *In how far is immersive storytelling used to communicate topics in the field of CSR?* (*RQ 2*) *How do CSR and PR experts perceive the potential of immersive storytelling.* To answer the RQs this study used a mixed-methods approach: We conducted a content analysis of a sample from German company websites (n=210); we further draw on survey data collected from an online survey (n=140). The quantitative data is contextualized through qualitative narrative interviews with PR-professionals (n=20) and a focus group discussion (n=18).

Results

The data collection took place from December 2019 to January 2020; data analysis will be finished by April 2020.

Keywords: *CSR, CSR-Communication, immersive Media, Storytelling, AR, VR*

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An employee-centered model: Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for CSR, morality and organizational identification

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Prior research argues that inconsistent CSR strategies, such as larger external than internal efforts, can reduce employees' identification with an organization. However, the mechanism through which external CSR and internal CSR may affect organizational identification differently remains unaddressed. This research examines the mediation roles of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for CSR as well as perceived organizational morality in the relationship of CSR and organizational identification.

Literature review

Drawing on social identity theory and attribution theory, we distinguish internal CSR (i.e. meeting employees' need for safety and security) and external CSR (i.e. meeting employees' need for distinctiveness), and argue that the impact of internal CSR on organizational identification is mediated by intrinsic motivation and perceived organizational morality. On the other hand, the impact of external CSR is predicted to be mediated by extrinsic motivation and perceived organizational morality.

Methodology

The proposed mediation effects are empirically tested through a survey among professionals working at a multinational alcoholic beverages company in Russia. In total 622 employees participated in the online survey, out of which 481 completed the questionnaire. The dataset (n=481) was analyzed through structural equation modeling.

Results and Conclusions

The results provide insightful evidence with regard to how different types of CSR are perceived among employees. First, we confirm that internal CSR influences intrinsic motivation and perceived organizational morality, which in turn influences organizational identification. Second, we found that external CSR has a negative direct effect on perceived organizational morality, but a positive mediated effect on perceived organizational morality through extrinsic motivation. This result can be potentially explained by a mixed feeling of the employees: They do not recognize a direct linkage of external CSR with organizational morality, but can understand the value of external CSR on enhancing extrinsic motivation which will in turn contribute to justifying organizational morality. Next, the results indicate that organizational identification is mainly affected by internal CSR, and only marginally by external CSR.

Practical and social implications

This research contributes to our understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying impactful employee judgements of CSR strategies. It provides important guidance for organizations in aligning employees through committing to specific CSR strategy and active CSR communication within the organization.

▲

Key-Opinion-Consumers (KOCs): the emerging influencers contributing to the purchase intention

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) have been proven as an effective way in affecting consumers' purchase intention (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). As KOLs' endorsement gradually turns to paid sponsorship by brands and public relations agencies, the effectiveness of using KOLs as a way of communication is decreased in Hong Kong (Tang, 2017). While the potency of employing KOLs started diminishing, the use of Key Opinion Customers (KOCs) as a novel means has started emerging.

Key Opinion Customers, or Key Opinion Consumers (KOCs), is a newly developed concept that emerged and claimed to be more favorable in building a brand's image (Digital Business Lab, 2019). KOCs refers to a group of general consumers, who provide product reviews and trial experiences from consumer perspectives, and spread their content via private accounts on social media networks. KOCs are viewed as authentic-oriented and are more credible (Digital Business Lab, 2019). This study aims to investigate KOCs, as influencers, whose impact on consumer and what are the major inherent factors and attributes of source credibility to KOCs.

Literature review

Source credibility model (Ohanian, 1990) claimed that the reliability of a message depends on a perceived level of attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness of an endorser, such as KOLs or KOCs. A scale was constructed to measure the source credibility.

The definitions, nature and audiences between KOLs (Katz, Lazarsfeld & Roper, 1955; Kotcher & Nisbet, 2009; Misci Kip & Uzunoglu, 2014) and KOCs, were also investigated through literature review.

Methodology

Online quantitative survey was conducted targeting interviewees who lived in Hong Kong for over 180 days in 2019 and purchased kids and parenting products or services from Aug 1 to Oct 31, 2019. KOLs and KOCs definitions were stated in the survey and only those who declared themselves to understand the definitions were valid samples.

Snowball sampling was made through social media networks, including Whatsapp, Facebook inbox messages and posts on Facebook pages related to parenting groups. Data were collected during the period from November 14 to 17, 2019, and a total sample of N=147 were received, where 111 were valid.

Results and conclusion

Based on a 5-points scale, results indicated that KOCs (mean=3.90) have a greater impact on related purchase intention than that of KOLs (mean=2.88), who have neutral impact in the kids and parenting industry in Hong Kong. Furthermore, the results indicated that the selected inherent factors of KOCs and KOLs, i.e. trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise, could all positively affect the purchase intention of general consumers. Out of the three factors, trustworthiness (mean=3.95) is the most important source of power of KOCs as they influence general public's purchase intention. It is worthwhile to learn that sexy-not sexy is the least important attribute of attractiveness to both KOCs (mean=2.11) and KOLs (mean=2.30).

Results also demonstrated that trustworthiness, attractiveness and expertise have a strong positive correlation to KOCs in their influences on the related purchase intention. Particularly, purchase intention is strongly related to trustworthiness and expertise of KOCs (r>.8) while trustworthiness and attractiveness (r>.5), and attractiveness and expertise (r>.5) also play important roles in influencing related decision-making behavior.

The study concluded that KOLs have less impact on general consumers' purchase intention when it comes to kids and parenting products or services in Hong Kong, which is different from Dhanesha and Duthler's 2019 study. The findings revealed that KOCs, a newly developed group of influencers, who have a greater positive impact on consumers than that of KOLs. Due to authenticity concerns, KOCs might be linchpin influencers than KOLs in certain industries, such as maternal and child products.

Practical and social implications

Along with the results where KOCs have been proven to have a significant impact on customers' purchase intention, practitioners may consider adopting different influencers, such as KOCs, in certain context where authentic word-of-mouth does have an impact. When choosing KOCs, trustworthiness and expertise factors would be considered first than attractiveness in kids and parents industry.

This study illustrated the potential investigation into KOCs communication and its effectiveness. Researchers could further study related topics in a bigger scale or in other industries such as healthcare or financial fields, where authenticity and credibility of the word-of-mouth is of high requirement. (word count: 715)

Keywords: *key-opinion-leader, key-opinion-consumer, key-opinion-customer, kids-and-parenting, purchase intention*

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Are Likers All Buyers? Effects of Storytelling Strategies of WeChat's Sponsored Content on Chinese Millennials' Brand Favorability, Purchase Intention and Word-of-Mouth

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Introduction and purpose of the study

Social media are critical for brand communicators today. As China has become the world's largest emerging market, understanding how Chinese consumers process online information is indispensable for international brands. However, studies on sponsored content are largely based on Western media platforms (Voorveld et al. 2018; Smith, 2017).

WeChat, the largest social media app in China, had over 1.15 billion monthly active users as of Q2 2019, and 86.2% are 18-36 years old (Statista, 2020). WeChat Public Accounts (WPAs), a key and popular functional module of WeChat, is similar to Facebook pages where users can follow their favorite KOLs and brands to receive pushed articles. WPAs has become an integral tool for brands to build relationships with their potential and existing customers. It greatly contributes to Tencent's (WeChat's parent company) annual advertising revenue of RMB25.61 billion (approximately $3.8 billion) (Tencent, 2018). Some Internet celebrities make as much as RMB100 million (approximately $14.8 million) per year by producing sponsored content (Li, 2019). But do these brands get their money's worth?

The effectiveness of branded content has been an abiding interest for marketing public relations scholars (Campbell & Marks, 2015; Carlson, 2015; Hart, 2014; Hwang & Jeong, 2018), while a distinctive type of content on WeChat remains unexamined. Instead of using "paid" or "ad" as traditional sponsored content does, WPA authors use "plot twist", a literary technique that introduces a radical direction change or unexpected outcome of the story, to disclose the sponsorship: The narrative starts with an ordinary and irrelevant story; as the story towards the end, the sponsorship suddenly emerges. This "seamless transition" exhibits playfulness while often generates controversy among readers: Some praise its innovativeness, while some feel betrayed. Although this phenomenon has gone viral among over one billion WeChat users, the types of disclosing strategies, the rationales behind the strategies and their effectiveness still lack attention from academia.

This study aims to answer two questions:

- What storytelling strategies best motivate consumers' brand favorability, purchase intention and word-of-mouth?

- How perceived deceptiveness and perceived innovativeness of the article mediate the impact of storytelling strategies on consumers' brand favorability, purchase intention and word-of-mouth?

Literature review

The signaling theory provides a framework to understand how informational cues (i.e., signals) are conveyed by one party to another to facilitate a favourable attitude or action (Mavlanova, Benbunan-Fich, & Lang, 2016). Brands interacts with their existing and potential audiences by sponsoring the KOLs (mostly Internet celebrities), hoping to convey quality informational cues (product-related signals) to influence people's brand attitude and buying decision. Meanwhile, the KOLs, also need to build affective bonds with their followers on WPAs via person-related signals to stimulate trust. In this study, we categorize the information cues conveyed by the sponsored articles into product- and recommender-related characteristics (Chen, Lu, Wang, & Pan, 2019; Li, Srinivasan, & Sun, 2009).

Additionally, referencing to Frow's (2015) genre theory and Gerrig's (1993) narrative transportation theory, our preliminary study on 100 recent sponsored content on WeChat identified three storytelling strategies:

- Problem-solution narrative: the sponsored product/service is disclosed as a solution for a problem;

- Analogy narrative: the sponsored product/service and the first half of the storyline share common characteristics (e.g. the article begins with a story about masculinity ends with a sportscar)

- Associative narrative: the sponsored product/service and the story have inherent logical connection (e.g. the article begins with a wedding or relationship-related story ⬜ ends with a jewelry or photo frame brand)

Methodology

A 2 (product-related vs. recommender-related) x 3 (three story narratives) is conducted to test the effectiveness of different storytelling combination on consumers' brand favorability, purchase intention and word-of-mouth. A virtue brand of speakers is used in the stimulus to avoid confounding factors. Representing China's main consumer force (Dudarenok, 2018) and major WeChat users, 300 millennials (born between 1980-early 2000) are recruited in the experiment. Perceived deceptiveness and perceived innovativeness are examined to see whether they act as mediators between IVs and consumers' responses.

Results and conclusions

The study is in progress and will be completed in around three months. Some preliminary results from pilot study include: Problem-solution narrative with product-related signal generates more trust and less perceived deceptiveness, less perceived innovativeness, and lower level of word-of-mouth, while associative narrative with product-related signal produces higher level of perceived innovativeness, brand favorability and intention to share with others, but lower level of purchase intention. "Likers may not be buyers".

Limitations and suggestions for future research

The study is limited to the context of WeChat and Millennials, therefore the research results may not be generalizable to other ages and cultures. Future studies can test the model on other social media platforms such as Twitter or Facebook. Moreover, product type and involvement

can be considered in future studies.

Practical and social implications

The study represents the first investigation into the storytelling strategies of WeChat's sponsored article, emphasizing the importance of information cues and storytelling, contributing to the research stream of the genres of branded content strategies and their effectiveness, providing valueble insights to both communication researchers and brand communicators.

Keywords: *Mass media effect, WeChat, Sponsored content, Chinese consumers*

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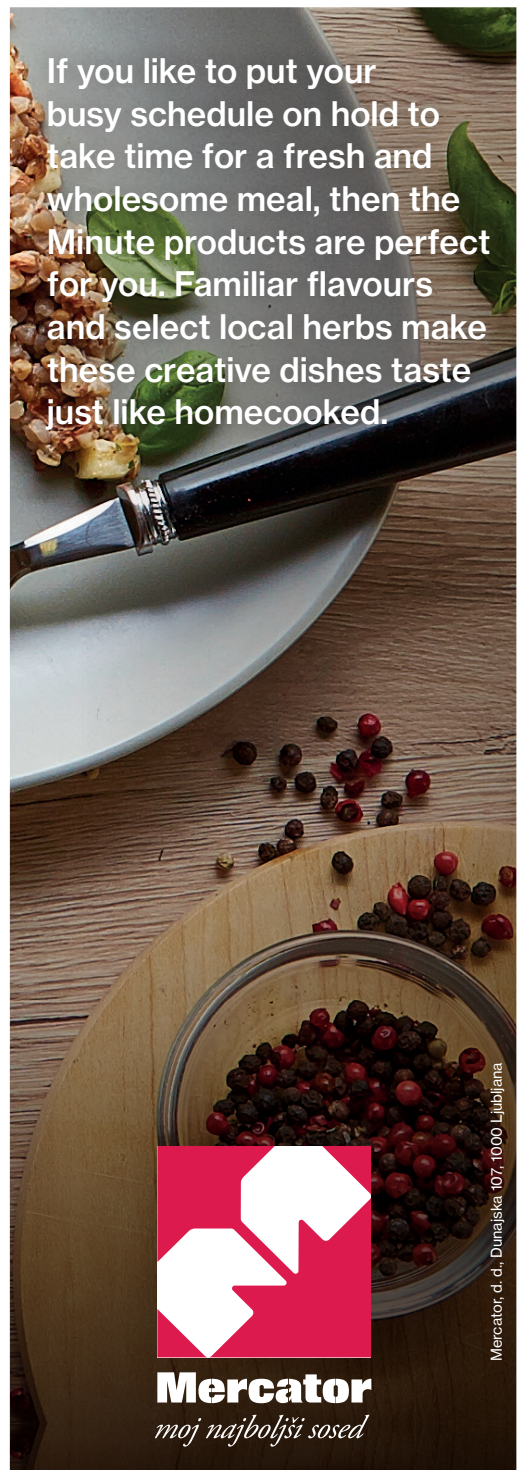
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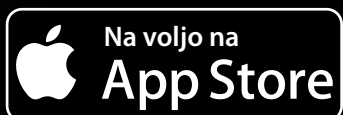
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