

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM.

**EXPLORING THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USED BY GOVERNMENT
PUBLIC RELATIONS OUTFITS IN GHANA: A CASE OF PUBIC RELATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF MINISTRY OF INFORMATION**

BY

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MAPR 19040

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND
RESEARCH, GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS (MA) DEGREE IN
PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my original research, and that no part of it has been presented for another (degree or diploma) in this institute or elsewhere. I am responsible for any shortcomings.



29-09-2020

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this dissertation was supervised by me in accordance with the guidelines of supervision of dissertation laid down by Ghana Institute of journalism.



September 28, 2020

Dr Collins Adu -Bempah Brobbey

Date

(Supervisor)

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to God almighty, to Mr. and Mrs. Yamoah who supported me financially and in prayers, to my dear supervisor who worked tirelessly to support and correct this work, and all my family and friends who helped me in one way or the other, I say I am most grateful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indeed grateful to god because he has brought me this far my project and with him all things are possible. praise be to his name for a great piece. this dissertation owes its success to a number of people, who in diverse ways contributed towards its completion. First, I wish to thank my supervisor Dr. Collins Adu- Bempah Brobbey, the acting Dean of the Graduate School, a visiting Assistant professor, United Nations University for peace, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and a senior lecturer at both the Ghana Institute of Journalism and the University of Ghana, Legon. God richly bless you for taking time off your busy schedules to access and address all our shortcomings in order that our project work becomes exceptional. his constructive criticisms and input and selfless attention went a long way to shape this work.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

PR - Public Relations

MOI- Ministry of Information

SM- Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This study determined to explore the benefits of government public relations use of social media at public relations department of ministry of information in Ghana. Primarily this study analysed the social media tools used by the ministry of information to assess whether the use of social media benefits the practice of public relations at the public relations department of the ministry of information. The study was anchored on the social presence and media richness theory. With the PR department of the ministry of information as the area of study, this study employed in depth interview, questionnaire as well as peer review articles and with the help of purposive sampling technique selected all 15 respondents to help the researcher explore the benefits of social media use in the practice of government public relations. Findings of this revealed that social media is used in public relations practice in the PR department but with partial use in relation to internal communication. The findings also revealed that facebook and twitter are the most preferred tools for external publics, mainly because of ease, reach and speed in use. WhatsApp was preferred for internal publics mainly as an alternative to traditional media. These social media tools are used mainly for informational updates and respond to enquiries. Respondents were in a unanimous agreement that social media has improved service delivery at the PR department. This study concludes that the benefits associated with social media is rich in meeting communicative and service objectives in public relations practice in government, but there was lack of right approach to implement it. The study recommends that there should be a development of a harmonized media strategy, offer training to the office staff and embrace social media tools appropriately for internal publics with a bit of friendliness.

Keywords: Social Media benefits, Government Public Relations Department, Ministry of Information

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Karakiza (2015) suggest that the overflow of new technologies and the use of social media have altered the way people communicate with each other. New technologies and social media, nevertheless, changes the communication between Government and the citizens as they contribute decisively to the transformation of public administration towards a new and open set-up that will be characterized by: the active participation of citizens in public affairs, the close collaboration between public services and between government and citizens, and the transparency of the State activities.

Bertot et al (2010) notes that social media presence is a symbol of a vibrant and transparent communications strategy, and, to that end, social media offer particular utility to government public relations. Social media tools like Facebook and twitter can improve the interaction between a government and the public and help them to reach the numbers that do not consume traditional media as frequently as others.

This new technology allows officials in government to build relationships with the citizens who are usually the key stakeholders. Ledingham (2003), observes that the relationship-building potential of social media is especially valuable for public relations professionals since building relationships is at the core of public relations. In Addition, social media enhances government's abilities to interact with and engage citizens as well as to meet their expectations for transparency.

Practitioners in government public relations have more tools to engage and communicate with the public than ever before. A recent survey by Smith (2011), showed that two-thirds of online adults use social media platforms. Additionally, Raine (2011), also observed that 40% of Internet users go online for data about government operations, and social media users are more tied to civic groups.

Social media offers numerous opportunities for the government. According to Bertot and Jaeger (2011), the open, dialogic nature of social media removes many of the barriers in communication that these governments have encountered in the past. Communication with constituents can be more frequent, open, and targeted. In the past, the government has relied deeply on traditional mass media to disseminate public information, Dixon (2010). The advent of Facebook and twitter provides government officials the means to communicate directly with their publics without the intervention of editors and reporters, who can act as gatekeepers or censors of information (Smith, 2010).

Additionally, Kingsley (2011) notes that with the decline in newspaper readership, the quality of local coverage of news and information could be waning, thereby forcing officials to find new outlets to reach their publics. Dixon (2010) posits that in the past, governments have had to rely almost exclusively on traditional media specifically newspapers, television, and radio, to get information to citizens. Because of this, governments had limited control over what was disseminated to publics and when it would be distributed. The flourishing of the Internet and particularly social media has changed the landscape for communications. Traditional media are now not the only source of public government information influencing public thought and

discourse. Shirky (2008) also adds that traditional media accommodate a one-way communication model, but a one-way power over news generation and dissemination is largely obsolete. Accordingly, Clark and Aufderheide (2009) argues that the fundamental difference between social and traditional mainstream media is the user to user format as opposed to top-down news dissemination. With social media, users are able to post, share, and republish information easily and quickly. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It is crucial for organizations to have strategies in place for utilizing social media.

This research seeks to evaluate the use of Social Media through public relation relations by the government at the ministry of information and addresses the opportunities and challenges that government officials at the ministry of information face in incorporating this new technology into their communication plans.

1.1 Statement of Problem

Bertot et al (2010), suggest that the innovation associated with social media yields significant benefit to the government. As a user-generated media, social media allow public relations practitioners in government the ability to inform and to seek input and opinions from relevant publics (Hand & Ching, 2011). Despite the enormous value social media offer government-citizen relations, there is limited studies on the extent to which governance is actually using social media to inform and engage publics in Ghana. Given the extraordinary growth and popularity of social media over the past few years, it is important to evaluate if the government in Ghana is using this technology to communicate with their publics and how government leaders are incorporating it into their communication plans. Social media are transforming the way organizations communicate with their publics, and governments are not exempt from societal pressures to make use of them. With the absence of any empirical literature in Ghana this research provides an

important study of social media use through public relations by the Ghanaian government at the ministry of information.

Stromback and Kiouisis (2011) in similar study discuss Political public relations, an umbrella under which Government public relations can be found, in the said study Political Public Relations is considered as a theme that can best be understood as a management process by which an organization or individual uses purposeful communication for political purposes and seeks to influence, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics. However, this study admitted the need for additional research and theory building in the growing area of political public relations similar to Government public relations. Owing to this suggested direction from the said study this research focuses on Government Public Relations and Social Media Use at the ministry of information in Ghana.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What social media tools are used by the ministry of information in Ghana?
2. How the public relations department of the ministry use social media?
3. Why the public relations department of the ministry use social media?

1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to investigate the benefit of government public relations use of social media at the ministry of information in Ghana. Specifically, this study intends to:

1. Analyze the social media tools used by the ministry of information in Ghana.
2. Assess the use of social media by the public relations department of the ministry.
3. Investigate the benefits of the use of social media at the public relations department of the ministry.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on Government public relations and social media use at the Ministry of Information in Ghana. The study limited itself to a case of public relations department of ministry of information for more conclusive results. This study looks at how the social media tools is used, whether social media has enhanced service delivery in terms of information passed from the department and factors for preference of social media tools by the publics to make inquiries and give feedback. With this in view, the findings of this research can be used by other departments in various government ministries in Ghana and in developing countries in general enhancing relevant validity of study.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The aim of this research is to critically analyze the beneficial use of social media in the practice of public relations by the Government at the ministry of Information in Ghana. This study will also add to existing literatures and serve as a working document for the ministry of information in Ghana. The findings of this study are valuable to various stakeholders: First, the findings of this

study is important to future researchers and academicians as it acts as a source of reference on the application of social media on service delivery among government ministries in Ghana. Furthermore, the outcomes of the research are essential since they recommend areas to improve or further investigations. The results of the research are also important to policy makers on the use of social media within the government offices. Also, it can help in the provision of information on the proper application of social network sites to deliver services in Ghana. Additionally, the study findings would also be beneficial to public relations officials in various ministries of the government.

1.6 Chaptalization of the Study

The research shall comprise of five (5) chapters. Chapter One covers the introduction of the study, statement of research problem, aim and research objectives, research questions, relevance of the study, and the Scope of Study. Chapter Two on the other hand deals with the literature review which shall include: Introduction, Related Studies to the research topic under study, Definition of key concepts, and Review of theoretical framework. Chapter Three discusses the methodology used for the study and would outline the setting of the research, target group and research design. This research is based on a quantitative research method. Other key areas under methodology to be considered are sources of data and data collection techniques and tools, population, sample size and the sampling technique. Chapter Four of this research looks at the organization and presentation of data collected in the study. It will also unveil the findings of the study and their interpretations. And finally, Chapter Five will focus on the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the related and relevance literary works conducted by different researchers on the use of social media by government public relations with the aim of ascertaining the tools, use and benefits of social media to the practice of public relations by government and its institutions such as ministry of information.

It also encompasses the theoretical foundation of this study and analyzes how theories relate to this study could help explain and gain understanding of the research topic. This study also provides the conceptual framework of government public relations and social media use with specific emphasis on the ministry of information. A social media presence is a trademark of a vibrant and transparent communications strategy, and, to that end, social media offer particular utility to local government public relations. Social media tools can improve interactivity between a government and the public, and they reach populations that do not consume traditional media as frequently as others (Bertot, Jaeger, Munson, & Glaisyer, 2010). The review attempts at providing details on the topic government public relations and social media.

In what follow, is the discourse on the **theoretical foundation, review of the related and relevant literatures as well as the conceptual framework or** underpinnings of government public relations and social media uses benefits.

2.1.0 Theoretical Foundation

This work is anchored on two theories:

2.1.1 Theory of Social Presence

This theory was incepted by John Short, Bruce Christie and Ederyn Williams. As per the theory, successful communication happens if the means of communication has sufficient social presence. In regards to the social presence continuum, physical communication is considered as having the highest level of social presence whereas written has the least. It is presumed that in the theory, interaction encompassing two individuals, they are both aimed at performing certain roles and preserving some level of personal connection. The two elements of any interaction are regarded as interparty and interpersonal communication (Short, et al.,1976). Dubois and Gadde in 2012 came up with the social influence model of technology which explained that the social media impacts the exchange of news, interactions and learning. It can also influence a person's behavior. Based on the social presence theory, attitudes and impacts of the media are expected to differ and be partially and socially constructed. The social psychological procedures that are utilized to describe the creation of meaning and use trends with regard to communication technology encompass social learning as per Gillin (2009) and the processing of social information as further highlighted by Eisenhardt and Kathleen (2009).

In addition, the theory maintains that behavior patterns are supposed to grow based on observing others, effects of behavior and emotional reactions according to Eisenhardt and Kathleen (2009). This type of social influence on one's behaviour can originate from a communication showing others' opinions, behaviours and practices. This theory relates to this study in that, social influences through social media has had an effect on how PR practice is done in government. Approaches or

models that scholars believed to be very practical in government public relations are refuted. For instance, Public information model has to be abandoned in the era of social media, because of interactivity, two-way communication, dialogic, among other features of digitalization.

2.1.2 The Media Richness Theory

The media richness theory in the opinion of Martin (2009) is based on the assumption that the purpose of any communication is to resolve ambiguity and reduce uncertainty. It states that different types of social media differ in the degree of richness they possess and based on capacity to convey multiple verbal and nonverbal signals, ability to allow immediate feedback, usage of natural language, and presence of personal focus. Accordingly, some social media are more effective than other in resolving ambiguity and uncertainty. Messages that are less equivocal do not require rich media. Instead, lean media should be used to adequately carry these messages. In the hierarchy of media richness, face-to-face communication is the richest, followed by telephone, electronic mail, and print communications (Katz & Lazarsfeld 2010). Therefore, applying the theories discussed above to social media, people may be influenced either positively or negatively depending on the amount and type of information that needs to be processed or transmitted (media richness), personal reasoning or perception (social cognition) and the degree of socialization needed (social presence).

Media richness theory argues that performance improves when team members use "richer" media for equivocal tasks Dennis & Kinney (1998). This is true if the social media can be incorporated in public relations practice. For social media has been promoted in academic literature as one of the best ways to open up the organization to dialogue and build ongoing relationships with publics (Grunig 2009, Kelleher 2007 and Kelleher & Miller 2006). Robson & James (2013) clarifies that social media is a tool for achieving PR practice objectives. Some authors suggest the social media

sphere requires organizations to be transparent, authentic, give up control, engage, collaborate, and be personal, relevant and speedy with their communication (Hearn, Foth, & Gray, 2008; Henderson & Bowley, 2010) This makes it richer media for government PR.

2.2.0 Review of Related and Relevant Empirical Literatures

As already indicated, the review of the empirical literatures is thematized relative to the relevance of the conceptual underpinnings, this is because the literatures on the subject matter is legion. The review is therefore structured as follows:

2.2.1 Government Communication

Understanding government communication as being about building relationships with publics implies that government public relations is not simply about managing public opinion for electoral gain. As Ledingham posit, referring to government communications to elevate the discipline from just a single craft to a more strategic management function which contributes essentially to the successful interaction between organizations and publics (2011, p. 235). Thus to gain the public's loyalty and trust, government communication is necessary to provide the avenue of interacting with the citizenry over a long duration (Lilleker & Jackson, 2011, p. 166), this involves an approach that is proactive and strategic in nature rather than a reactive and technical approach (Kioussis & Strömbäck, 2011, p. 315). Government communication requires an appreciable involvedness in relation to goals, needs, publics, operation and resources more than the corporate sector (Da Silva & Batista, 2007; Liu et al., 2010; Canel & Sanders, 2012). Government communication functions in a multidimensional and governmentally diverse environment. Consistent with the issue of goals, for instance, government communication mostly need to juggle what is seen to be parallel with the objectives set by political masters. Communication goals

associated with persuasive objectives are described as problematic by several scholars, for the most part by those working in the political communication environment (Jackson, 2010, Kioussis & Strömbäck, 2013). Also, in relation to publics, government communication runs on a multilayered situation, considering a diversified group of stakeholders as well as other politicians, service users, minority associations, regulatory groups, and the likes. Heads of communication at the PR departments, for instance, in the government ministries, agencies and institutions may be assigned a communication role as head on nepotistic and partisan basis rather than professional criteria. (Gagliarducci & Manacorda 2020).

An assessment and review of most literatures on political communication shows that it is often adopted to illustrate exclusively prominent executive communication at the presidential or prime ministerial level (Canel & Sanders, 2012). Essentially, for the majority of several literatures on political communication research centred on government communication is seen to lean towards themes such as media management and office holders' rhetoric exclusively in relation to senior national government. But government communication can also be used to refer to communication undertaken by executive institutions at regional and local levels (Ipsos, 2008; Jenei, 2012).

The case of defining government communication can be approached at different levels, observing, the activities (what it does) or taking a look at what it is. For example, defined as a policy tool (what it does), Howlett sees government communication as a guiding principle or tool to provide effect to the strategic goals of the policy; to influence and direct course of action through the provision or withholding of information or knowledge from societal players (2009, p. 24). The understanding that defines government communication from the perspective of what it does is likely to be restrictive in the sense that it looks at the actions which are part and only part of what government communication is. For example, in the analysis of Pfetsch, government news

management is understood as a strategic alternative to tweak public information in the instance where governments manage communication with the aim of influencing public opinion by controlling the news media agenda (Pfetsch, 2008, p. 90). In the views of Lee, Grant and Stewart (2012) the practice of government communication is understood in terms of government public relations.

Furtherly I think it is essential to possibly examine what government communication is. The definition offered by Strömbäck and Kiouisis is useful in this sense. They aver the following definition of political public relations: ‘Political public relations is the management process by which an organization or individual actor for political purposes, through purposeful communication and action, seeks to influence and to establish, build, and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations with its key publics to help support its mission and achieve its goals’ (2011, p. 8).

This definition refers to what it is (a management process) plus its purposeful trait; the elements encased to express the purpose (namely, ‘establish, build and maintain beneficial relationships and reputations’) show the ideas and dimensions that follows below, introduces perspectives novel for the analysis of government communication. In order to encapsulate the full range of the possibilities of government communication, I submit in suggestion the subsequent operational definition of government communication: The act, application, goal and achievements of communication as it occurs in and support of public institution(s) whose main aim is directorial in the aiding of a political rationale, and which are instituted on the basis of the people’s indirect or direct consent and charged to enact their will.

This definition includes both conceptual as well as functional aspects. The idea of ‘purpose’ reveals extensive questions for the analysis of government communication. This comprise prime ministerial or presidential communication and also local and regional government communication. Executive communication is contrasted with the deliberative communication legislatures use to decide public policy through determining the law, and with the judiciary, whose function is to make judgements in relation to disputes about the application of the law. In this study I will focus on ministry’s government communication through the use of social media.

2.2.2 Government Public Relations

In today’s world the news media and technological advances is seen to play significant roles in the lives of most Ghanaians, the field of public relations and governance has virtually paid less attention to the subject of government public relations. Berman (2012) notes that effective strategic communication advances the mission of a public agency and also provide an essential and desirable public service. Taylor (2012) argues Public relations is an essential tool of governance and information is a crucial aspect to government accountability.

The benefits of social media is highly recognized by Firms and public relations practitioners across every industry. A survey by Wigley and Wang (2012) uncovered that 82% of the respondents’ firms use social media. Furthermore, responses recorded also indicated that the stakeholders they interact with most frequently are potential clients, 71%, and the news media, 61%. These findings are consistent with past scientific revelations by Taylor and Doerfel (2003), who asserted that online communication is becoming a necessity for firms, which are quickly incorporating them into their communication and operating plans.

PR professionals employed in government agencies mostly note that developing communications strategies for governmental firms is different than for corporate or non-profit organizations; Grunig and Jaatinen (1999) argues that whilst the universal principles remain the same for all organizations, “the specific conditions for the application of the principles are different” (p. 219). The emergence of the government decision wheel supports this claim. Liu and Horsley (2007) provide a theoretic methodology to examining the distinction between corporate and government communication practices with their outline of the government communication decision wheel. They aver that the environment within the government sector generates distinctive challenges and opportunities that distinguishes the practice of public relations from the private sector. The shortcomings and opportunities comprise: politics, public good, legal constraints, devaluation of communication, poor public perceptions, lagging professional development, and federalism (Liu & Horsley, 2007).

Government Public relations involves the doing of two things first, implementing the agency’s central mission and second, fulfilling the democratic responsibilities inherent in government. (Berman 2012).

Government public relations is pragmatic, anticipated to fulfill the mission of the agency, but in an unconventional manner that reduce costs. For instance, public service campaigns are means to influence public behavior in a manner that is less expensive than policing. The pragmatic benefits of public relations, external communications can also be used to cause and achieve the goals of a democratic society. These may be circumstances of “information for information sake” rather than as an end to a tangible management goal. Instances of this facet of government public relations are, reporting to the public on agency activities as a way of contributing to an informed public, sharing information as a prelude to citizen participation in agency decision making, and paying

attention to public opinion. The major part of Government Public relations, according to Heise (1985), concerns itself with governments to interact with citizens in an open, direct, and timely manner with their publics, without any cause to manipulate people with the information being shared. The Internet and particularly social media offer great opportunity to that end. (Adoyo 2014).

Wright and Hinson (2010) uncovered that often public relations professionals recognised that social media tools were beneficial to their organizations. Specifically, 77% of responses received pointed that social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn were important, 65% held that micro-blogging sites such as Twitter were important, 65% agreed video sharing sites such as YouTube were important, and 57% believed blogs were important. Public relations practitioners often see social media as a “cost effective way to get massive reach for research and timely targeted dialogue” (DiStaso, McCorkindale, & Wright, 2011, p. 327). In addition, public relations practitioners within the government circles recognize that one of the most crucial functions of social media is “getting attention focused on an issue” (Lariscy, Avery, Sweetster, & Howes, 2009, p. 13). Also PR professionals also employ the use of social media tools as a means to advance ideas and activities and provides a suitable environment for two-way dialogue with publics (Avery, Sweetster, & Lariscy, 2010). However, while social media present PR practitioners particularly those in public sector with many positive opportunities, there remain challenges that must be addressed.

A seminal study that interviewed PR managers about the impact of social media in their organizations cited the lack of control as the basic limitation of social media use in public relations practice both in the private and public sector (DiStaso, McCorkindale, & Wright, 2011). Participation in social media expose organizations to both internal and external crises. Internally

organizations may need to be attentive towards the online behavior of publics that could potentially harm their brand, such as criticism directed at authorities or government, copyright issues, and embarrassing employee behavior; externally, criticism, deceitful information, and rogue activist groups can cause considerable damage (DiStaso, McCorkindale, & Wright, 2011). Notwithstanding, there are many advantages of using social media which have gain longevity in public relations communication plans.

2.3.0 Conceptual Framework

2.3.1 Concept of Social media

The concept social media refers to a collection of tools and services facilitates direct user interaction online. Sweetster and Lariscy (2008) define social media as “revolving around the idea of a read-write web, where the online users move beyond the passive viewing of web content to actually contributing to the content” (p. 179). Basically, social media entails anything that employs the Internet to aid conversations and mostly have the form of social networking sites, blogs, and Wikis (Solis & Breakeyridge, 2009). Simply, this understanding of social media is used to guide this study. The concept is mostly linked with any site over the internet. However, according to most empirical literatures, it is described as a web-based application giving access to users to put up a profile in a closed system, with other users connecting with each other whilst perceiving themselves as friends online (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Pointing to this definition, social media could be said to be social networking, since it allows a communication channel between individuals. The social network sites phenomenon has seen adaptation by people at a very speedy rate. The social media simply explains the various sites where members/users can post and applications such as Facebook, twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn

and Instagram which are rated the top three by Ocansey (2016) as ranked above and five biggest in Ghana followed by You Tube and lately tiktok, among others. As of September 2015, Facebook reported that approximately 1.1 billion users log in daily (Daily Active Users or DAU), which is nearly 17 percent annual rise. Other sites such Twitter are not left far behind as well. A research conducted by the Social Media Today (2016) stated that during the 3rd quarter of 2015, micro-blogging reached approximately 307 million active monthly users. At the start of 2015, Twitter had gone past the 255 million monthly active users for each quarter. From the foregoing, the public relations practitioners in the public sector cannot absent themselves from the benefit of the reach effectiveness these social media platforms offers, driven by the fact that most people own mobile devices and most likely, access the internet. Strikingly, sites on the world wide web is best for corporations to develop their social media strategy since it is virtually about engaging your audience to interact with you, your mission, values, picture or app for attraction and gives speedy visibility and publicity, that is less costly (Kent & Taylor 2015).

2.3.2 Conceptualization of public relation roles

For more than three decades, researchers have investigated PR by reviewing at specific functions performed by experts (Broom & Smith, 1979). Studies on PR roles started with Broom and Smith (1979) who did exploratory experiments. Clients acted as the focal point of the study whereby their perceptions, attitudes and opinions on the roles of or function of PR professionals were gathered (Broom & Smith, 1979). The research came up with 5 main functions: provider of technical services; professional prescriber; communication facilitator; problem solver and acceptant legitimizer as per Broom and Smith (1979).

However, acceptant legitimizer was later dropped after results found it non-essential. In 1982, Broom redefined the remainder of the 4 roles and termed them as expert prescriber, communication

facilitator, communication technician and problem-solving facilitator. Expert prescriber was responsible for the identification of communication challenges between an enterprise and the customers and come up with solutions to the various problems (Broom & Smith, 1979). Under this role, the practitioner is autonomous (Broom & Smith, 1979) and supposed to be very intelligent in regards to public relations and communication challenges.

An issue synonymous with this role is that the customers may rely on their expert prescriber as they are quite passive when it comes to solving problems (Broom & Smith, 1979). Since an organization is just doing as prescribed by the practitioner instead of cooperating with the public, suggested solutions are mainly asymmetrical and not effective in the long run (Broom & Smith, 1979). As the name goes, the task of the communication facilitator involves allowing communication or exchange of information between an organization and the customer (Broom & Smith, 1979). The primary aim of this role is encouraging a two-way discourse between an enterprise and the customers (Broom & Smith, 1979). The role is important as it aids organizations to engage in a two-way symmetrical communication according to Grunig and Hunt (1984). The two-way symmetrical communication allows for all those involved to access sufficient information to carry out choices or decisions for mutual benefit (Broom & Smith, 1979). Both expert prescribers and problem-solving process facilitator have similar encyclopedia inscribed with the collective efforts of volunteers and easily accessed by anyone so long as there is internet connection.

Blogs are other representations of the social network sites which allow users the chance to publish and take part in different conversations through the internet (Weber, 2009). They are essential for businesses as they help build reputation especially in the event of positive blogging and can also

be destructive in the case of negative blogging. Content communities grant people the chance exchange media information between one another.

The social media sites follow content communities in the assessment of the types of social media. With the help of such types, people connect and exchange information, photos, instant messages and video clips. Also, users can send out invitations to others. Twitter and Facebook happen to be among the two common and popular social media sites in the world and as a result, they are used by many companies to reach out to clients and display their commodities or advertise (Kaplan, 2009). roles, in other words, finds the source of a problem and work towards getting the solution (Broom & Smith, 1979). Even though the application of this model can be tiresome, it basically has good outcomes in the long run for organizations according to Broom and Smith (1979; Dozier, 1992). Ultimately, the communication technician function emphasizes on the real generation and communication of PR items (Broom & Smith, 1979). Some of the functions encompass the articulation of press releases, generation of fliers and upgrading of lists of media (Broom & Smith, 1979).

The differentiating attributes of technicians is that they can carry out jobs that the customer considers essential (Broom & Smith, 1979; Dozier, 1992). Compared to practitioners in other functions, this job is not associated with the identification or eliminating any challenges (Broom & Smith, 1979). Study on the four initial PR roles discovered that the first three were mainly related though that of the communication technician was not (Dozier,1983). As a result, Dozier made simple the functions and integrated with the first three to be regarded as the role of the manager and found that of the technician as different or remained separate. Under the two role typology, technicians are regarded as those involved in the production and communication of materials based on the requirements of the clients or management (Broom, 2009). Managers are

simply practitioners involved in the process of making decisions according to (Dozier, 1992). They utilize explorations to be informed of their approaches (Dozier, 1981, 1986; Judd, 1987) and review their effectiveness or achievement (Dozier, 1984). PR renders an organization highly effective, thus, when it determines the most tactical publics as constituent of strategic management and carries out communication plans to create and preserve successful long run relations between the public and the management. Even if the initial four roles is used, no single practitioner will lie into a single function all the time (Broom, 2009; Dozier & Broom, 1995; Moss, Newman, & DeSanto, 2005).

Nonetheless, practitioners have a tendency of being dominant in their role (Broom, 2009). Dozier (1989) stated that the new technologies have the chance of helping the field of PR to make new achievements or cover significant milestones. He further stressed that they can be helpful to the management and technicians based on what it brings forth or aids the PR practitioner accomplish (Dozier, 1989).

Tools which are entirely essential in enhancing communication are important to technicians whereas those that enhance research abilities are more advantageous towards managers (Dozier, 1989). This literature clearly shows how public relations role has changed in the era of social media. There is even a new job title, termed the social media expert. In addition, these changes suggest that in the current media climate, PROs need to be considering social media as part of communication strategy (Robson & James 2013). The part informs the study by bringing out the roles of Pros in a social media environment, which indicates on how the practice is done in government nowadays.

2.3.3 Public relations and social media

A longitudinal research was initially conducted by Wright and Hinson (2009) in 2006 on the use of social media by PR experts. Every year, they have done an online research on the attitudes and behaviors of PR practitioners regarding the various social media instruments. Initially, the explorations emphasized on blogs, though they have changed to include new elements as they are discovered. Notwithstanding the duration of investigating social media, Wright and Hinson maintained that it is hard to deduce the actual definition of the social media.

Nonetheless, they acknowledged the hardship or challenge with explaining it. Consequently, they came up with their definition which stated that the social media gives the ability to relay internet-based data developed created by users with the aim of communication. The rapid emergence of the social media has made it essential in public relations. Nonetheless, decades ago, the internet was not a priority among most PR practitioners (Hill & White, 2000). Even though a lot of research has been conducted in the field (Hill & White, 2000; Levenshus, 2010), the rapid changing nature of technology renders most of them incomplete. A research done by Hill and White (2000) illustrates the rapid revolution the tools have brought about in public relations. They discovered that in as of 2000, using the internet as a PR approach was a low priority for PR practitioners.

Nevertheless, they were to uncover that practitioners acknowledged the potential advantages of the social media in public relations in the future (Hill & White, 2000). A website was not considered as a substitution for physical contact but as a means of reinforcing relationships that were already present, primarily due to the role of the email (Hill & White, 2000). With the absence of any literature concerning any study around this topic in Ghana this study refers to a similar study conducted elsewhere. For instance, in Kenya studies have proved that social media is indeed used even in government departments/ agencies. Adoyo (2014) carried a case study on effects of social

media on state agencies; Kenya Revenue Authority. His findings were that Facebook and Twitter were used. A negative effect was laziness among PR officers. Indeed, PROs, have embraced social media. This informs the researcher that, as much as social media might be used, probability of new forms to emerge is high. Also, social media exist to compliment the traditional media for public relations practice.

2.3.4 Importance of social media and public relations

In the recent past, most investigation have reviewed the application of new technology by PR practitioners (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008; Sha & Dozier, 2012). Specifically, academic research on social media and PR is still in infancy, mostly from US, based on quantitative and large scale corporations. (Avery et al 2010, Curtis et al 2010, Gillin 2008, Robson & James, 2013). The new technologies currently embraced are mainly social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. The application of the social media is at a very fast rate. A few years ago, blogs and podcasts were the popular means of communication by PR experts though the social networking sites were employed by nearly 24% of the practitioners (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008). Currently, the social media is regarded as an integral part of PR campaigns.

The results of a study conducted by Mogos (2011) showed that social media humanizes a company. The author says that social media puts a face to a company because people want to interact with other people. Therefore, organizations adopt social media usage in order to humanize its interaction with stakeholders. According to the author, organizations that adopt social media usage are more likely to reduce the social gap between the business and consumers.

The application of the social media instruments is a constituent of a pattern that focuses on the significance of a two or multi-directional in PR rather than the communication of information (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Wright and Hinson (2008) learnt that most of the PR experts perceive that the application of the social network sites has had positive effects on PR and also uncovered that around 85% of PR experts are convinced that these tools and the conventional media are complementary and do not rival one another. (Wright & Hinson, 2009).

A significant proportion of PR professionals are convinced that social network sites and blogs affect the content of the mainstream media as indicated by Wright and Hinson (2008). It implies that even though the advantages of social media are acknowledged by the industry, conventional media is still crucial and reliable. The social media does not necessarily incorporate social networking sites but others such as message boards, blogs, Wikis, podcasts, video sharing, micro-blogging websites and really simple syndication (RSS) according to Wright and Hinson (2009).

A research done by Wright and Hinson (2009) surveyed the application of social media by around 574 PR experts in the US. Basics questions were asked concerning the overall significance of social media tools in public relations by an organization and their level of importance to an organization. Other questions covered which forms of social media the practitioners used to obtain information in public relations discipline. They considered search engine marketing as the most significant, then blogs, social network sites, video sharing and message boards. Social bookmarking and photo sharing were the least considered. In a different study conducted in the United States illustrated that PR practitioners believe that the social media and conventional media collaborate and influence each other in one way or another. The social media is a reliable means of exchanging and relaying information using the traditional means (Gordon, 2010).

The potential effect of the social networking sites on PR is immense. Yin in 2008 pointed out that staff blogs have significant and unlimited capability to improve dialogue and aid in the promotion of products and services and pave way for two-way means of communication. Oneya (2010) study on impact of social media on public relations had similar results, in addition, he established that Social media is used though with challenges like lack of internet accessibility, skills, reliability. From the ongoing, the use of social media is on the increase among organizations in Ghana, causing the urge to adopt social media as a tactic to improving public relations in the public administration. Cardenas (2013) highlights that for social media to be successful in government, it should advance the department mission, social technology objectives, department goals and activities framework. This is as result of this new form of communication growing at a faster pace. It is important to fill in the gap by assessing its use in public relations practice in government, with special focus to ministry of information department, going by what various scholars refer to be the concerns/benefits in line with new trends in the Public relations practice.

Literature reviews on the use and benefits of social media in government reflect that most studies are, foreign. And in Ghana in particular it is scanty and limited. It also suggests that embracing technology makes it happen. That, ideal social media use in public relations practice, is real out there and Ghana is not isolated.

A few studies done in Ghana on the practice of Public Relations involves models, training needs, challenges, relevance among others. Yi Wu and Boakye (2015) studied an exploration of PR models and cultural values in Ghana. Appiah, Dankwah and Dravie (2009) Sought to research on training needs assessment for public relations officers in public firms in Ghana. They used survey design. Their findings reveal that practitioners in government parastatals and other organizations

lack training in many areas of their profession, like, events management, time management, budget, public speaking, pitching, strategic thinking, presentation skills and team building. Omondi (2012) analyzed the performance of PR practice in government ministries in Kenya. The study found that PR practice has high impact in government according to 46% of respondents. Muthigani (2008) studied public relations practice a case of the ministry of information and communication. The study found out that even though the government communicates with its citizens, it needs to establish channels to obtain feedback from them and that are several challenges that affect PR practice. Social media seems to be that channel. Most of these works are unpublished theses. Oneya (2010) studied the impact of social media on public relations in Kenya. Adoyo (2014) studied effects of social media on state agencies; Kenya Revenue Authority.

In particular, there's no specific research done in government, specifically in Ghana at the ministry for information's PR department to establish the successful use and benefits of social media to achieve PR practice objectives. Even though exploratory study pointed out that social media needs transparency, authenticity among others researchers maintain that the actual state in relation to government practice is not yet known (DiStaso & Bortree, 2012; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011; Macnamara, 2011). Generally, the principles of social media have been obtained from scholarly works and researchers.

However, it is not appropriate to deduce that they lack merit or they do not need the principles, it's just that there has to be additional research conducted to reinforce them. This study uses these principles to gauge out whether social media is at all beneficial to the government PR practice.

2.4. Relevance of the Study

This study will enhance readers understanding of the current discourse on the benefits of social media used by government Public Relations outfits in Ghana using Public Relations Department of Ministry of Information as a case study. It will help readers to know the beneficial use of social media in the practice of public relations by government and also appreciate the fact that there are numerous benefits associated with the use of social media in PR practice. It will help PR practitioners in the public sector to appreciate that the use of social media in PR practice contributes decisively to transform public administration. It will also help to boost readers understanding that effective public relations require the use of social media in PR practice and the recent shift from the traditional approach of information dissemination to new model because of social media, affects how public relations is practiced in government.

This study provides an insight into the benefits of social media use by government public relations using a combination of an interview guide and survey data from the Department of Public Relations at the Ministry of Information. It would serve as a practical relevance to social concerns and technological application and add up to the knowledge on social media and government public relations literature important in the following ways. Also, it can help in the provision of information on the proper application of social network sites to deliver services in Ghana. It explores the potential benefits of social media use in assisting them deliver service to their publics as well as provides useful government PR information to practitioners on the social media tools frequently used by practitioners and accessed by publics. Furthermore. It serves as a guideline to PR professionals in within the government agencies in Ghana. The study can also be used as a point of reference for future research that will focus on the application of social media on service delivery among government ministries in Ghana.

2.5. Conclusion

This study has succeeded in providing an analysis of the theoretical foundation underpinning this study's issues under review, it explored the basic assumption, examined some conceptual framework for the analysis of social media and government PR, benefits, challenges and prospects among government agencies in Ghana , operationalized the concepts to provide context specific, discussed the relevance or importance of the study and then, identified and explained the knowledge gaps regarding the discourse on the benefits of social media used by government Public Relations outfits in Ghana, particularly, the case of Public Relations Department of Ministry of Information has been given little attention and that empirical studies have not been adequately conducted to elucidate the comprehensibility of social media impact in institutions in Ghana of which the Ministry of Information is no exception. This study seeks to bridge this gap in the literatures on social media use and its benefits in government PR practice.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was used in the study. It entails the research design, the target population, sample size, sampling procedure, instruments for data collection, validity and reliability of the instruments, procedure for data collection and how data was analyzed and presented. Ethical considerations have also been highlighted.

This chapter primarily focuses on the systematic body of methods or procedures utilized by the researcher in achieving the objectives of the study. The research methodology comprises of research design, philosophical paradigm, target population, sampling technique and sample size, sources of data collection, data collection instrument and procedure, technique of data analysis and limitations and delimitations.

In this study, both quantitative and qualitative research method was mainly used in the data gathering process. In this chapter, focus will be on the description of research method used in gathering information from the study areas. The description will be on research philosophy, research design, and research population, sampling method, data collection techniques made up of both secondary and primary source, data analysis, scope, limitations and significance of the study. The methodology in any research gives sufficient information for an investigator to make estimate of the reliability and validity of the methods used to explain whether the relationship between social media use and government public relations, yields benefits to the PR department of the ministry of information.

3.1 Methods

This study deployed the descriptive and analytic research methods viz, quantitative and qualitative method in gathering information from the study areas. The description will be on research philosophy, research design, and research population, sampling method, data collection techniques made up of both secondary and primary source, data analysis, scope, limitations and significance of the study. The methodology in any research gives sufficient information for an investigator to make estimate of the reliability and validity of the methods used to explain whether the relationship between social media and government public relations customer satisfaction and customer loyalty of Zenith Bank, Ghana has any benefits on the practice of public relations within the government sector.

3.2 Research Process

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

From the research process, the study adopts the research philosophy of realism. Saunders et al. (2003, p. 84) explains the philosophy of realism as “the belief that a reality exists, that is independent of human thoughts and beliefs. They indicate that a large scale of social forces and processes exist, and these do affect people. However, people are not necessarily aware of the existence of such influences on their interpretations and behaviors (Saunders Ct al., 2003, p.84). Adopting a realist philosophy, the approach from which the research was conducted was determined.

Preliminary Information Gathering

This involves the review of significant literature, interviews and discussions from significant sources. The sources of literature reviewed include both formal and informal interviews from

scholars in the field of public relations and published books. It also involved both published and unpublished work on the area under discussion in articles, thesis, journals and reports.

3.3 Research Design

This study employed descriptive survey to assess use and benefits of social media in public relations practice in government. This uncovered state of things in this era of digitalization. Thompson (2009) argues that the study becomes somewhat descriptive as data collected and analyzed is described. That is, things are presented as they are. Accordingly, descriptive research is often used when a problem is well structured and there is no intention to investigate cause/effect relations (Yin, 1989). Yin continues to argue that it can be referred to survey because of who, what, where, how many, how much type of questions, of which this study answers. This research design has dictated the choice of research strategy as outlined below.

To investigate the use and benefit of social media application in public relations practice in government, this study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This is in order to ameliorate biases inherent in single method. Therefore, triangulation of data sources was necessary for valid results. Heale and Forbes (2013) argue that the logic of triangulation implies that qualitative and quantitative methods can be combined to provide a holistic view of the phenomenon under study, thus giving birth to mixed methods. According to positivist paradigm, numerical associated with quantitative method is more objective when it comes to results. The positivists believed in the assumption that research should be completely objective so that the outcomes can be based in 'truth' and 'reality' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2006). On the other hand, Martin (2009) states that qualitative research is committed to viewing the social world: social action and events from the view point of the people being studied; that is discovering their socially constructed reality and penetrating the frames of meaning within which they conduct their

activities. Therefore, in this study, qualitative results helped explain or expand quantitative data collected. The questionnaire used in the survey research design for this study were filled out by the research participants of the study that is the PR department at the ministry of information. Due to the situation presented to us by COVID-19 questionnaires were administered to respondents via Email and subsequently responses were received from the respondents via Email. The interviewing of participants was conducted online with the aid of a computer assisted software known as Zoom. The interview was done one after the other. The questionnaire used was the self-administered questionnaire and the interviewer/personal interview questionnaire.

3.4 Study Area/Population

The target populations were public relations officers at the Ministry of Information in Ghana, deemed to have knowledge or experience on social media use. 15 Public Relations officers at the ministry were investigated. There are only 15 public relations officers in this department. Total population for PR department at the ministry in Ghana is 15 from which 15 officers were selected to participate in the research process.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sampling procedure used was purposive sampling. There was a definite focus to choose the 15 public relations officers at the ministry. The purpose for this specific selection was based on the logic that these individuals have experience and knowledge concerning use of social media and PR practice at the ministry. They were interviewed and administered a questionnaire. The researcher opted for individual rather than group interview, considering that significant amount of freedom is associated with responses obtained through one on one interview (Dury 2008). The reason for having 15 participants for the research is, to ensure that adequate time would be allocated to each of the participants to tell their story and for the researcher to be able to do the

analysis. These results would also ensure validity because it is 100% population included considering, there are only 15 members of staff at the PR department.

This sample size was effective for administration of questionnaires and its analysis considering the limitation of time. Altogether, choosing methods that empower the researcher is important because they allow for a deeper understanding and the simplicity of complexities and challenges that ensued Barbour & Schostak (2005).

In performing research, it is often impossible, impractical, or too expensive to collect data from all the potential units of analysis included in the research problem. Hence a sample was chosen to represent the relevant attributes of the whole population in the study. Because the samples are perfectly representative of the population from which they are drawn, the researcher was absolutely certain that the conclusion drawn would generalize the entire population. Collectively, this unit form the sample that the researcher studies.

3.5 Data Collection

Data was collected through interview schedules and questionnaires, well expounded as follows.

3.5.1 Questionnaires

Self-completion questionnaires were used of which provided a series of questions that the respondents would answer on their own. This is for general overview of an issue. The questionnaires contained clear questions, designed in both open and closed ended questions, designed in an easy way to the respondents The public relations officers' questionnaire had two sections. Section A of the questionnaire comprised their biographical and general information on

public relations. Section B comprised open-ended questions related to use of social media in public relations practice in government.

According to Bacon-Shone (2015) there are distinct advantages in using a questionnaire. Questionnaires are less expensive and easier to administer than personal interviews and they lend themselves to group administration, they also allow confidentiality to be assured. For these reasons, this is the perfect survey instrument to assess the use and benefit of social media in public relations practice at the ministry of information.

3.5.2 Interview Schedules

By interviewing public relations officers at ministry this would make the study satisfy some of the basic demands of this study. The selection of the interviewees was based on purposive sampling, which requires the choice of sample to be based on certain criteria (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The criterion in this study was that the participants were required to be public relations practitioners so that their rich experience could be used to expand and explain the survey results. Interview is the most widely employed method in qualitative research because allows a thorough examination of experiences, feelings or opinions (Barbour & Schostak 2005). These interviews took a semi structured format because the opinions of the informant were important to this research. Semi structured interviews allows for flexibility and convenience. (Bell & Emory 2011). As a data collection method, interviews are one of the most significant sources for use in obtaining case study information. Specifically, the interview method allowed the researcher to focus directly on the case study topic. Additionally, interviews were insightful in that they gave perceived causal conclusions (Yin, 1994). The purpose of a focused interview was to confirm certain facts that were already known to the researcher, following questionnaires administration and literature review. Interviews took a form of an open ended discussion in which the selected informants were

encouraged to air their views on the problem or issue that was under investigation (Cutlip et al 1999). Yin (1994) agrees that this allows the interview to stimulate a discussion. Responses from interviews were recorded under headings emerging from survey objectives. The interviews involved a one-on-one, face-to-face interaction because it built a degree of intimacy; thereby facilitating disclosure (Johnson, 2002). These were chosen as the aim was to elicit a rich experiential account from the interviewees that could provide depth and details about the topics which required further investigation (Johnson, 2002). The interviews followed a semi-structured pattern, whereby an outline of the topics to be covered was created and each topic was introduced with an open question. This helped guide the flow of the interviews.

3.6 Data analysis and presentation

This study used both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The data collected was analyzed as per objectives and themes, and then concluded. Data was cleansed before the analysis and therefore, any ambiguous answer be left out. Later the analyzed results were tabulated appropriately using graphs, charts, and simple percentages to illustrate the responses to the questionnaires and interviews.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

All participants in this study remained anonymous and no identification information was gathered hence ensuring confidentiality. Moreover, the act of participation was completely voluntary and there will be no actual benefits attached. The topic is overall neutral in nature and unlikely to cause discomfort and posed no risk to the respondents. However, respondents were at liberty to skip any question they deem uncomfortable.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE BENEFITS OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS AT THE PUBIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT OF MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter highlights research findings that emanated from quantitative and qualitative data collected during the study. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20 and the statistical techniques adopted for the analysis were the descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies. The study aimed at finding out the benefit of social media use in public relations practice in government. This took place at the public relations department of ministry of information, Ghana.

4.1.0 Analysis of Key Findings

In the first three chapters, the researcher set out to diagnose the problem understudy. Particularly, in chapter one the study identified the statement of problem, raised a number of empirical questions set some objectives to guide the study. In chapter two, it reviewed the empirical literature with the intention of establishing the knowledge gap(s), this study was achieved through the application of some theoretical grounds. In the third chapter, the methodology was comprehensibly discussed which provided the opportunity to collect first-hand information using very reliable data collection instruments.

In this chapter, it is only right to do some prognosis in the light of the objectives and the guiding assumption of this study.

The research objectives formed the basis of data analysis and interpretation. Thereafter minor

themes were generated under each objective. The main objective of the study was to establish the benefit of social media use in public relations practice in government in Ghana; case of the public relations department of ministry of information. Specific objectives of the study were to determine the tools and use of social media platforms embraced by public relations officers at the ministry of information's PR department, to assess whether social media use has inured to the benefits of public relations objectives in terms of information passed at the PR department.

The researcher administered 15 questionnaires to the PROs out of which all 15 were completed and returned; representing a 100% response rate. Only 7 PROs were interviewed, representing 46 % response rate. These objectives would form the basis of the discussions in this chapter. In what follow, the data is analyzed and then, discussed along with the objectives as already indicated.

4.2. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This portion of the questionnaire contains questions soliciting basic information from respondents within PR department of the ministry of information. The questions asked were their gender, years been employed, age, and level of educational qualification.

4.2.1. Respondents

Table 4.2.1.1 Distribution table showing the sex of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid Male	12	80.0	80.0
Valid Female	3	20.0	20.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The table above shows the number of males and females who were at PR department and subsequently took part in the study. The study showed that there were more males 12, representing 80.0% at the department than females, 3, representing 20.0%.

Table 4.2.1.2 Distribution table of years working at the PR department.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
1-2	0	0	0
3-5	3	20.0	20.0
6-8	5	33.33	33.33
Valid 9 AND ABOVE	7	46.66	46.66
Total	15	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The table above shows that Most of the respondents (46%) have been working at the department for over 9 years whereas 33.3% have been working there for between 6-8 years. Whilst only (20%) have been working there between 3-5 years. There was no one at the department who had worked below 2years.

Table 4.2.1.3 Distribution table showing the level of education of respondents.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
CERT.	0	0	0
DIPLOMA	5	33.3	33.3
DEGREE	8	53.3	53.3
Valid POST GRAD.	2	13.3	13.3
Total	15	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The table above shows the level of education of the participants of the study. On educational background 53.3% of the staff had a Bachelor's degree qualification, 33.3% had a Diploma while 13.3% had a postgraduate degree.

Table 4.2.1.4 Distribution table showing the age of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid 18-30	7	46.6	46.6
31-40	5	33.3	33.3
41 AND ABOVE	3	20.0	20.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The illustration above showed the age distribution of the respondents of the study. 46.6% were aged between 18-30years whilst 33.3% were aged between 31-40years and only 20% were 41 years and Above.

4.2.3 Social Media Tools installed at the PR department

The first and second research questions under this section explored whether social media is used in the ministry of information's PR Department in Ghana, and for how long it has been used. All the respondents (100%) agreed that the said department employ the use social media. This supports Wigley and Wang (2012) claim that social media is highly recognized by Firms and public relations practitioners across every industry and that several firms make use of social media. Respondents however, differed on the duration in which social media has been used at the department. 60% of the staff at the PR department indicated that it has been used for between 3-4

years, 20% were captured saying it had been in use for 5 or more years whereas 20% of the respondents had only noted it in use for not more than 2 years. This implies that social media use is a new phenomenon in this department with experience of less than 5 years. It is still in infancy stages of utilization compared to advanced world governments that have over a decade's usage.

A question on the tools of social media installed yielded to the following answered, put forward clearly in the table below.

Table 4.2.3.1 Distribution table showing the Social Media Tools installed at the PR department

Social media	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Facebook	10	66.6	66.6
Twitter	3	20.0	20.0
Instagram	0	0	0
WhatsApp	2	13.0	13.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

Table 4.2.3.1 shows clearly that social media tools are installed at the department. However, the frequency of the installation differs. From the table above it is evident that Instagram is a social tool yet to be installed and made use of at the ministry. The most commonly used form being,

Facebook 66.6%, Twitter (20.0%) is the second most used form whereas WhatsApp (13.0%) last. Facebook and Twitter are the main tools employed in this department.

4.2.4. Factors for use of social media at the PR department.

The study also sought to rate (social, informational, dialogic, publicity and advocacies), factors for use of social media at the PR department. The results are indicated below;

Table 4.2.4.1: Distribution table showing factors for the use of social media at the PR department.

Scale	Factors for use	Frequency
1-highest	Social	4
2	Information	1
3	Dialogic	3
4	Publicity	2
5-lowest	Advocacies	5

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

From the results above where in a Likert scale of 5 (where 1 is the highest and 5 the lowest) the highest preference was informational, publicity, dialogue, social and advocacies the least. During the interviews, most of staff agreed that the social media were used to pass information on services, policies, events and others that the department is involved with. Procedures and guidelines are expounded at these sites too, confirming the informational factor for social media use at the department.

4.2.5 Number of people who can be reached by social media

Table 4.2.5.1 PR department's response on number of people who can be reached by social media

Social media reach	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
100	2	13.3	13.3
1000	9	60.0	60.0
10000	2	13.3	13.3
Over 100000	2	13.0	13.0
Total	15	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The department's indication was much clear 13.3 % cited 100 as the reach capacity, whilst a majority of 60% pointed to a 1000 capacity reach via social media Again 13.3% both indicated a reach of 10000 and over 100000 as their social media reach capacity.

From the table above, the recorded responses reveal that the number of people who can be reached by social media was ambiguous. During interviews, majority of the participants stated that in 24hours they can have inquiries from about 1000 people seeking clarifications on services, procedures, and feedback. This implies reach per day, which could be what the respondents based as the figure for audience reach.

4.2.6: Social media in enhancing service delivery

Table 4.2.6.1: Distribution table showing whether social media enhanced service delivery?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
YES	13	86.6	86.6
NO	1	6.6	6.6
NOT SURE	1	6.6	6.6
TOTAL	15	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

Unanimously respondents were in a near agreement that social media has improved service delivery at the department. However, about 6.6% of the respondents could not state whether social media has enhanced service delivery or not. Again another 6.6% of the recorded responses said it had not seen an improvement in service delivery. This supports Wright and Hinson (2010) view that often public relations professionals recognised that social media tools were beneficial to their organizations. Again, Avery, Sweetster, and Lariscy, (2010) confirmed this stand anchoring that PR professionals also employ the use of social media tools as a means to advance ideas and activities and provides a suitable environment for two-way dialogue with publics.

More so, respondents were given space in the questionnaires to offer qualitative responses regarding their perception on whether social media is significant in enhancing service delivery. They gave various expressions on how social media is impacting service delivery at the PR Department of the ministry of information. Responses in the affirmative recorded the following: They cited social media as suitable avenue for people to make enquiries about services and get

instant feedback or guidance from the staff. Secondly, it was recorded that it has widened accessibility to information, in that it has reduced the need to physically visit the office to get information.

Thirdly, it makes it easier in giving instant information. Through social media, the PR department were also able to receive information from the public make it a two-way communication channel. Further, social media offered an ease in communication and covered a wide range information reached more people at the same time unlike other conventional means such as memos, letters and posters.

Moreover, it was determined that social media engagement with the public generates immediate responses and trust. People can have direct feedback on various services, be it request for further documentation. Respondents also revealed that social media was an efficient means in sharing of vital operational information. As such, colleagues could get real time information and assistance. Finally, respondents concurred that it created an avenue for the public to dialogue; members of public could now report both satisfaction and dissatisfaction unlike in the past where members of the public would stay quiet even in dissatisfaction for fear of stigmatization. This feature was also common during the interview with the public relations staff at the ministry. One member of staff pointed that, there is a WhatsApp page for internal publics, but remains dormant most of times. He quoted security purposes. This means that social media is effective in delivering the Ministry of information's PR Department objectives, but with a few obstacles. Again this confirms Cardenas (2013)'s assertion that for social media to be successful in government, it should advance the department mission, social technology objectives, department goals and activities framework.

4.2.7 Use of Social Media for Internal Communication

Table 4.2.7.1: social media use for internal communication

Social Media	Frequency	Percent
YES	8	53.3
Valid NO	7	46.6
Total	15	

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

From Table 4.2.7. 1, out of 15 staff members at the PR department 53.3% agreed that social media is used for internal communication, whereas, 46.6% refuted that. Respondents further stated that the following kind of information is channeled via social media at the department to internal publics, notices such as gazette public holidays, change of processes, death announcements of staff, official information and welfare issues among staff, Policy decisions on day today running of the department. The recorded response indicate that the PR Department sparingly uses social media for internal communication, and at personalized level.

4.2.8 Nature of roles played via social media at the PR Department.

Table 4.2.8.1: Distribution table showing the Nature of roles played via social media

Role	Rate	Frequency	Valid Percent
Planning publicity strategies and campaigns	4	3	20.0
dealing with enquiries from the public, the press and related organisations	5	8	53.3
organising promotional events such as press conferences, open days, exhibitions, tours and visits	2	2	13.3
Managing social media content through monitoring, moderation and reporting	3	1	6.66
writing and producing presentations and press releases	1	1	6.66

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

Table 4.2.8.1 shows that via the use of social media enquiries were the beneficial in complimenting PR roles within the department recording 53.3% whilst planning followed with 20% and organising recorded 13.3 %. However, both managing and writing scored the same frequencies with a percentage of 6.6. %

During interviews, majority of the staff at the PR department were in agreement that enquiries, social media monitoring, planning and organizing were all vital roles in this era. Also in the interview it was keenly observed that most of the respondents expressed the use of social media in the department as the mostly used because of enquiries, management of social media content and planning publicity strategies and campaigns towards educating the citizens on the services offered. This finding supports Taylor (2012) assertion that the use of social media in the practice of Public relations is an essential tool of governance as information forms a crucial aspect of government accountability to citizens.

4.2.9 The benefit of use of Social Media in government PR practice

Table 4.2.9.1 Distribution table showing the PR department’s response to interactive questions

Usage	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided
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Social media informs and educates the publics on the services and products offered	86.6%	13.3%	0%	0%	0%
Social media promotes goodwill through conversation and interactivity	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
Social media facilitates corporate communication through two-way communication to enhance understanding to the publics	86.6%	13.3%	0%	0%	0%
Social media helps in countering negative Publicity	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
Social media is an effective tool in news search and redistribution	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
Social media allows equal access to public information	70%	30%	0%	0%	0%
Social media facilitates transparency, accountability and timely response	50%	50%	0%	0%	%0

Social media improves the role of a public relations officer through experience and research	33.3%	40%	13.3%	6.6%	20%
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Source: survey/questionnaire

From the table above it evident that respondents unanimously agreed or strongly agreed that social media is very important. The respondents were in the affirmative that social media is used by Public Relations officers in a number of ways. This idea comes from the results which are the very issues that imply information, interactivity, research, as main value of social media. The rating of these ideas varied highly as tabulated above.

Interviewed respondents believed social media is important in government PR practice. However, they suggested the need to have trainings that will enable their' effective use of social media.

Consequently, one issue raised concerns the overload to the PR department. That apart from normal tasks, social media use was a mandatory daily practice. This data informs the previous question on whether service delivery has been enhanced. The benefits have been expounded herein.

4.3.1 Most preferred social media tool by publics

Table 4.3.1.1 Distribution table showing most preferred social media by publics to make inquiries and give feedback

Preferred Social Media	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Facebook	9	60	60
Twitter	2	13.3	13.3
WhatsApp	4	26.6	26.6
Total	15	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The PR department of the ministry of information' respondents relayed that 60% preferred Facebook while 26.6% preferred WhatsApp. A smaller percentage 13.3% responded that some publics use Twitter to relay information or enquiries to the department. On the contrary, most of interviewees denied ever having a Twitter as a means for the public communication. This portrayed that the preferred social media by the publics to make enquiries and give feedback to the department were Facebook and WhatsApp.

4.3.2 Most preferred social media tool for addressing external and internal publics

Table 4.3.2.1 Distribution table showing most preferred social media tool by the PR department to communicate with the external publics.

Preferred SM tool	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Facebook	9	60	60
Twitter	4	26.6	26.6
WhatsApp	2	13.3	13.3
Total	15	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The study reveals that the respondents prefer Facebook and Twitter respectively. The responses in the table above, 60% and 26.6% expresses this better. In communicating with external publics, the study revealed that Facebook and Twitter are the commonly used media. This is due to its simplicity and wide reach. These findings are consistent with past scientific revelations by Taylor and Doerfel (2003), who asserted that online communication is becoming a necessity for firms, which are quickly incorporating them into their communication and operating plans.

Table 4.3.2.2. Distribution table showing most preferred social media tool by the PR department to communicate with the internal publics.

Preferred SM tool	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Facebook	0	0	0
Twitter	0	0	0
WhatsApp	15	99.9	99.9
Total	15	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

Figures from the Table above showed that respondent were in a unanimous selection of WhatsApp as the only social media tool employed by the PR department in communicating with internal staff members (internal publics). The study revealed that in communicating with internal publics, the most preferred social media tool was WhatsApp. No form of internal communication was channeled through Facebook or Twitter.

Interrogating further in an interview with the respondents most of them expressed the reason for this as that they did not find it suitable and convenient in communicating with internal publics using the Facebook or Twitter. However, they all stated that they receive internal information their internally through Emails.

4.3.3. Attributes of social media that promote its preference in communicating with publics

Table 4.3.3. 1. Distribution table showing: attributes of social media that promote its preference for communicating with the publics

Attribute	Frequency	Percentage %
Access	15	100
Positivity	2	13.3
Openness	5	33.3
Assurance	5	33.3
Networking	12	80
Sharing task	3	20

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

From the table above the attributes of social media that promote its preference in communicating with publics rated Access at 100%, networking 80%, openness and assurance 33.3% respectively, sharing tasks 20% and positivity 13.3%.

All respondents agreed that their preference for any social media form was guided by their ability to access it in the first place, followed by networking. Assurance and openness are important in enhancing trust and transparency. A lower percentage of the respondents recorded that use of social media improved the aura of positivity at the work place. This seem be at personal level.

Access and networking are important in PR practice. Accessibility to public information enhances service delivery, that is, dissemination of information and publicity. The network makes this access to information easier.

4.3.4 Daily use of social media in public relations practice

Table 4.3.4.1 Distribution table showing daily use of social media in the ministry's PR department.

	Frequency	Percent
Valid Yes	13	86.6
No	2	13.3
Total	15	100.0

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

A majority of PR department's respondents (86.6%) replied that social media is used at the department on daily basis while 13.3% responded in the negative. In trying to explain the above responses, some personnel at the PR department said that it was not used daily since they had not come across engagement/posts on a daily basis from the department. However, majority reported to seeing daily posts. Nonetheless, those who contended that it is used on daily basis were quick to justify possible reasons for this. They included the following: Responses to queries from the public, enquiries are done on daily basis, responding to queries from the public and daily updates. Further, interviewees revealed that there are daily social updates. In addition, in every week there is usually an arranged online session chat arranged to engage the public and the ministry of Information.

4.3.5 Activities done on daily basis through social media by the PR department

Table 4.3.5.1. Distribution table illustrating daily activities by use of social media responses

	Frequency	Percent
Valid		
Timely response to queries	8	53.3
Update of Status	6	40.0
Attitude Survey	1	6.6

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

From the table above the collected response were as follows; timely response to queries (53.3%), update of statuses (40%), and attitude surveys (6.6%). From the table it is clear that there is universal agreement on the hierarchy of the activities done on daily basis and as such the response to queries dominates the daily acts at the ministry's PR department. During an interview, respondents confirmed that social media has brought an ease of feedback to queries on procedures, requirements and services.

4.3.6 Frequency of feedback (compliments or complaints)

Table 4.3.6.1: Table illustration of Frequency of feedback (compliments or complaints) appearing on social media concerning the Ministry.

	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Daily	8 53.3
	Weekly	5 40.0
	Fortnightly	1 6.6
	Monthly	1 6.6

Source: Survey study/ questionnaire

The tabulated results for the frequency of social media use indicated (53.3%), (40.0%), (6.6%) and (6.6. %) reflecting daily, weekly, fortnightly and monthly, respectively from the respondents.

The interviewed respondents affirmed that social media has become a daily communication tool and practice towards their work at the ministry. Social media has become a routine of public relations practice in the government. This active use of it implies that PR roles have to be revisited, enhancing enabling environment for delivery of services and achievement of organizations objectives.

4.3.6 Reasons for Preference of Facebook when dealing with feedback

Having determined that Facebook is the most preferred social media with (60%) of response results cited from Table 4.3.2.1 for responding to queries from external publics, the study sought to determine the reasons behind this preference. The researcher allowed space for respondents to

offer qualitative responses. The study’s findings were as follows: Respondents were of the view that Facebook is easy to use, easy to access, is already in use by a wide population; hence it was the best platform to clarify generalized information.

More so, interviews revealed that it is because of a wide reach and almost everyone is on Facebook.

4.3.7 Response to interactive questions

Table 4.3.7. 1: Table illustration of Response to interactive questions

Usage	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided
Publics seek information on services and products offered in the department through social media	86.6%	13.3%	0%	0%	0%
Through use of social media, the department gives updates on services and products	0%	100%			
Our public relations officers research and	66.6%	33.3%			

scans through social media to find on publics attitudes/opinions					
social media is used by the department to interact with publics	93.3%	6.6%			
social media is used to research on better ways of relating with the public by the department	53.3%	20%	13.3%	6.6%	13.3%
Departmental meetings focus on feedback from social media channels	13%	13%	13%	13%	46.6%
The dept. spends more time reviewing and writing on social media platform than other tasks	6.6%	46.6%	46.6%	0%	0%

Staff in future will need to take courses on social Media.	73.3%	26.6%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Survey/questionnaire

The respondents were in the affirmative agreement that social media is used by Public Relations department in a number of ways. Some of the reasons for use of social media featured in high percentage were informational 86.6%, update on services 100% interactivity 93.3% and need for training for the department rating 73.3%. Other statements are lowly rated. The emphasis of service delivery enhancement through the use of social media reappears. The need for training for effective utilization of this media is very essential.

4.4.0 Discussions of Key Findings and Conclusion

As already indicated, discussions of the data analyzed above is done on the following areas: First, is on the overall (general) objective of the study. The second is on the specific objectives with their corresponding research questions answered in the course of the discussions. Discussions are also done on key areas of the data that will help in the understanding of the study.

Key Findings revealed that, there is use of social media in government public relations practice at the PR department of the ministry of Information. Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp tools being used. The most commonly used tool was Facebook, followed by WhatsApp, whereas Twitter comes at a distant third; being the least used tool at the ministry. This is a good indication that adoption of social media has come at accelerated pace. The evident high use of varying forms of social media is a clear proof of that. Previous studies indicated that Facebook and Twitter were the main social media forms employed in state agencies public relations practice (Adoyo 2014). Oneya (2014) has stated in general that social networks are used without specifications. Twitter is therefore, a new tool emerging in use.

In a likert scale of 5 (where 1 is high and 5 low) showed a varying level for factors for use of social media. Results implied that informational, dialogue, publicity and social factors arranged from the highest to lowest reasons were considered. This implied that the Department of Public relations at the ministry is at different stages in implementation of their social media use strategies. There is therefore need to harmonize the efforts on focus areas in which social media is used. It is also revealed that PR department continue to use social media just as they use traditional channels, as

a way to push promotional messages (informational) rather than using them to facilitate two-way symmetrical dialogue. (Grunig, 2009) This is a transformation of analogue practices of government public relations on online! The public information model is still maintained in the era of digital media. To this end, Dozier's (1989) view that new technologies can either help PR practitioners do something they do or let them do something completely new applies. Service delivery is enhanced through responsive communicative practices via social media to external publics. Dialogues, immediate feedback, accessibility, are the major factors that the respondents appreciated. It is therefore a rich tool in fostering relations with publics, and achievement of the departmental goals.

The study also revealed that for internal communication there was almost a half-half state for social media use. Interviews conducted cited the use of Email as the most frequently used medium for internal communication. It is also indicated via the interview with respondents that there are restrictions for internal publics when it comes to free use of social media by management. In relation to the above findings, social media therefore, do not effectively address the internal public needs as such. PR ought to make an organization effective when it identifies the most strategic publics and conducts communication programs to develop and maintain long term relations. (Dozier, 1981; 1984) It is either; internal publics are communicated to through alternative media.

Gordon (2010) views that new social media tools compliment traditional ones resurfaced. Or communication through social media is sparingly and an occasional, with much adherence to professionalism and rigidity that causes unfriendliness through which internal public interests is ignored. The kind of information passed to internal public is mainly notices on announcements such as death, welfare issues and day to day policies. Therefore, social media use for internal

communication is mainly one way. From the management to the internal publics who play a passive role of recipients.

Again the study also found out that the PR department plays many roles in this social media era. Feedback, planning, managing and organizing were added to normal duties. Another issue that arises is that the social media in roles management, demands more time and encourages less face to face contact with the publics. (Bhargava 2010) also had similar views with more emphasize on work load. The roles emphasize how PR professionals become multifaceted; expert facilitator who is the problem solver, communication technician who focuses on dissemination of PR materials, and altogether strategizes to deal with clients' needs and acceptance by use of social media as research tools-management. (Broom & Smith, 1979 Broom, 1982). Facebook and WhatsApp becomes handy in technician role. The best to this end is to have a social media specialist who can analyze the publics and give relevant strategies in order to have balance in addressing both the external and internal publics.

From the foregoing, social media is important for it promotes transparency and accountability through pushing important information online (Cardenas 2013). This is the main feature that received higher rating in the study. This transparency is achieved through information access, a major drive for Government communication. Other necessities of this media are conversation, interactivity, publicity, risk management, research among others. The exchange of messages, as in itself can't be termed dialogue, but promotes interactivity that builds mutual understanding and trust between organization and publics. From the study, social media is important in government PR practice.

The study also revealed that the that tools of social media used varied depending on the nature of audience. For instance, when communicating internally, the public relations department used WhatsApp. However, when communicating with members of the public, there was a combined use of both Facebook and Twitter. Communication that originated from the public however was through Facebook. This was attributed to simplicity and wide range of users that the Facebook platform allowed. The preference of Facebook and Twitter informs the argument that today's customer is an online type. If 1.1 billion people log on Facebook daily, then, is an affirmation to the above statement (Facebook 2015). Ease of communication through social media is important. As revealed by reasons of preference of some tools, access and networking are important. A lower percentage of WhatsApp use is glaring fact that WhatsApp is a bit personal and would be difficult to be made public.

The study revealed that there is a frequent use of social media, on daily and weekly basis, in PR practice in government. The reach effectiveness necessitates it as a daily communication tool in PR practice. Hence, challenging the traditional role of the PR officer and adding more workload, because social media requires consistency in online communication, to keep handling the frequent complaints and critical comments. The activities being done daily include timely response to inquiries and update of statuses. This implies that social media has become a daily and part of the role by PR practitioners in govt. That PR is seen through these activities as an effort to preserve brand and image with the publics.

This study therefore draws a number of conclusions which have been summarized in Chapter five. Meanwhile, in general social media is rich media to enhance service delivery in government, at this time of digitalization. This has confirmed the media richness theory, which proves Dennis &

Kinneys argument (1998) that rich media improves performance. Training needs in the use of social media should yield more favourable results if considered.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

Social media use is important in the practice of public relations. It is essential for the government to understand how social media benefits this practice if they are able to use social media effectively. The focus of this research was to explore the benefits of government public relations use of social media; a case of the Public relations department of the ministry of information. This chapter provides a summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study focused on finding out the beneficial use of social media in public relations practice in government. The area of study was the Public Relations department of the Ministry of Information. The study revealed that there has been active use of social media in government of Ghana for duration more than 2years. It was uncovered that there are three tools of social media that are officially used to relay information. These tools were Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. The degree or extent of their use varied significantly with respect to the origin of the communication, that is, from government to the public or from the public to the government; or from government officers to other government officers.

It was also determined that the PR practitioners preferred using Facebook and Twitter when communicating to the external publics whereas WhatsApp was used to circulate memos, circulars and briefings internally. Overall, the most commonly used tool was Facebook. This was attributed to its relative ease of use compared to the other two. Moreover, it was seen that the department could reach more people in Ghana via Facebook than through any other social media means. Twitter was the second most used tool whereas WhatsApp came at a distant third; being the least

used form-mainly internally. Therefore, social media had become a daily act of the PR practice, with findings indicating response to enquiries as major daily activity. Similarly, the respondents were divided on whether social media is used for internal communication at the department or not. Of the respondents interviewed, 50 % agreed that social media is used for internal communication while the other 50% differed in response. Many thought disagreed on its internal use opined that it was only utilized to relay what had already been communicated. For example, a memo that had been released would be captured in photo format then circulated via WhatsApp to colleagues.

The study revealed certain attributes of various social media forms in use which had endeared them to the publics at PR department. These included accessibility, positivity, networking and convenience in sharing ideas and sharing tasks. The ease with which one social media form enabled users to enjoy this attributes was a guide to preference of that social media form over the others. In line with this, the research assessed whether social media enhanced achievement of PR practice objectives at information ministry's PR Department. It was determined that the communication content varied, ranging from informational content, social content and publicity material. Informational discourse, which dominated the results.

External and internal communication was also achieved. Feedback to enquiries also imply effective communication. Moreover, the study revealed that social media had impacted positively on service delivery at the ministry's PR department. It was uncovered that social media had created a suitable avenue for publics to make enquiries and received guidance simultaneously from the PR office.

Finally, social media is seen to have widened accessibility to information, whereby the public no longer had to physically visit the office to get information or service. Furthermore, social media had eased communication between public relations officers and other line state departments hence the PR officers were positions to relay the same to the enquiring public hence offering timely responses to issues at hand. Moreover, it was determined that social media engagement with the public generated immediate responses hence improved trust and confidence in public service. Social media was in active utilization at the department on daily basis.

5.3 Conclusions

The study concluded that government public relations practice is in active utilization and adoption of social media and is seen to be beneficial. The study concludes that the public relations department is unsure of the estimated population it is able to reach through communication via social media. This means that there are no assessments done for effective use of social media.

Social media is used for information, publicity, to pursue dialogue and also to convey social messages such as the department conveying seasonal greetings during festivities like Christmas. Therefore, the social media is used to promote brand and preserve image other than promote mutual understanding. The study concludes that social media has been instrumental in enhancing public communication and service delivery through enabling simultaneous interactions but still holds of the control of what to be done through it.

The study also assessed whether social media use enhanced achievement of PR practice objectives in terms of information passed in the PR department. The type of information passed through social media was mainly informational. Meaning, the main aim is to push messages to the publics.

Publics were merely passive recipients. It was discovered that, social media was more beneficial to external publics than internal.

This could mean internal communication was sparse or done through other media, and it is obvious that there is lack of right approach to implement social media as a main communication tool for the internal publics. Unlike what Adoyo (2014) argued that social media provides an opportunity for everyone to communicate effectively and efficiently in away unprecedented by any other media.

There was a general agreement that social media informs the public on services, promotes goodwill through conversation and dialogue allows access to public information, thereby facilitating transparency, accountability and timely response. The study also revealed that Facebook was the most preferred tool by external publics for making inquiries, and for responding to the public. This was due to ease, reach and cost effectiveness. The PR department also preferred the same for communicating with the publics. Internal communication preference tool was WhatsApp. There was control of messages from internal publics. Access and networking were the main attributes accounting for preference of social media in the PR department. These are the main factors that enhance its use. It is clear that, social media was used rottenly, hence a daily tool in PR practice. Mostly, the activities done on daily basis included timely response to inquiries and this was as a result of complaints or complements appearing daily from the public update of statuses. That face to face interaction had reduced, following publics seeking information via social media.

5.4 Recommendations

This study makes a number of recommendations viz, recommendations for governmental policy actions, stakeholders and for future research and praxis.

5.4.1. Recommendations for Governmental Policy Actions

This study recommends that the ministry's PR department should consider developing a coherent social media strategy. This would enable the public relations department to appreciate the revolutionary nature and positive attributes that social media can bring to the organization. This will be necessitated by a social media public officials' implementation guide that will ensure right policies, strategies and assessment tools (Cardenas 2013). This would solve the issues of risk averseness, restrictions, evaluation and unequal use for internal verse external communication.

5.4.2. Recommendations for Stakeholders

It was noted that some of the members of staff at the department were at least 40 years old hence may not be technologically savvy. The study recommends that efforts should be put in place to ensure that they are well adapted to the social media use generation without falling prey to information confidentiality breaches that are a concern today. Training in social media use will enhance this course.

The study recommends that the department should embrace the tools of social media deemed appropriate to the internal publics with a bit of friendliness. This would ensure that the department does not lose the trust and confidence it has already developed with the internal public as that would dampen efficient service delivery and non-achievement of public relations practice goals.

5.4.2. Recommendations for Future Research and Praxis

Finally, further research should be carried out on areas of social media reach estimation, response rate to enquiries done through social media and finally the view of social media uses in government public relations from external perspective.

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APPENDIX

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STAFF OF DEPARTMENT OF MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

Kindly assist me by answering the following questions. Please note that your response will be treated with utmost confidence and that there will be no identification of individual.

This questionnaire is for research purpose only for partial fulfilment of award of degree in Master in Public Relations at the Ghana Institute of Journalism and will not be used in any other way whatsoever.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Please spare a few minutes to complete the questionnaire below
- Kindly tick or answer the questions correctly
- Do not write your name. Any information given will be treated with utmost confidence.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?

Male ()

Female ()

2) How long have you been in the public relations office?

1-2 Years ()

3-5 Years ()

6-8 Years ()

More than 9 ()

4) Level of education:

Certificate ()

Diploma ()

Degree ()

Postgraduate ()

5) What is your age group?

Between 18-30 years ()

Between 31-40 years ()

Above 40 years ()

SECTION B

1. Do you use social media in PR practice? Yes () No ()

2. Which of the following tools of social media are installed in your department (if more than one tick)

Instagram ()

Facebook ()

Whatsapp ()

Blogs ()

Twitter ()

Others, state.....

3. How long has social media been in your department?

1-2 Years ()

3-4 Years ()

5 or more years ()

4. At the scale of 1-5 rate the following factors for the use of social media in your dept.

(where 1 is high and 5 low)

Social () Informational () Dialogic ()

Publicity () Advocacies ()

5. Quantify the number of people who can be reached through social media basing on membership in various groups.

100 () 1000 () 10000 () More than 10000 ()

6. Do you think social media use has enhanced service delivery in at the PR department?

Yes () No ()

Explain your answer above-----

1. Do you send information to internal public through social media? Yes () No ()

If yes, what kind of information? (State as many)

2. In a scale of 1-5, rate the following roles carried out by your department.

department through use of social media. Where 1, is the lowest and 5, the highest.

planning publicity strategies and campaigns	
dealing with enquiries from the public, the press, and related organizations	
organising promotional events such as press conferences, open days, exhibitions, tours and visits.	
Managing social media content through monitoring, moderation and reporting	

<p>writing and producing presentations and press releases</p>	
--	--

3. In this section, please tick appropriate box in response on how you agree or disagree with the statement given.

Key

SA - Strongly Agree **A** - Agree **UD** - Undecided **D** – Disagree **SD**-Strongly disagree

		SA	A	UD	D	UD
1	Social media informs and educates the publics on the services and products offered					
2.	Social media promotes goodwill through conversation and interactivity					
3	Social media facilitates corporate communication					

	through two-way communication to enhance understanding to the publics					
4	Social media helps in countering negative Publicity					
5	Social media is an effective tool in news search and redistribution					
6	Social media allows equal access to public information					
7	Social media facilitates transparency, accountability and timely response					
8	Social media improves the role of a public relations officer through experience and research					

4. Which is the most preferred social media tool in the ministry by the publics to make inquiries and give feedback? _____

5. Which is the most preferred social media tool that is used to address the following?

External publics Internal publics.....

6. Which of the following attributes of social media are the reasons for its preference use in maintaining relationships in your department? Tick as many as possible

Access ()

Positiveness ()

Openness ()

Assurance ()

Networking ()

Sharing of tasks ()

7. Do you use social media on daily basis as in your public relations practice?

Yes () No ()

Explain your answer above.....

8. Which of the following activities are done on daily basis by the public relations officers in the department?

Timely response to queries ()

Update of statuses ()

Attitude surveys ()

None of the above ()

9. How frequently do complains/complements appear on social media concerning your department?

Daily () Weekly () Fortnightly () Monthly ()

10. Which is the preferred social media tool by public relations office when responding to complaints and critical comments on social media? -----

Why? (Explain your answer above) -----

11. Please tick on how you agree or disagree on the statement below.

Key

SA – Strongly Agree **A** - Agree **UD** - Undecided **D** – Disagree **SD**-Strongly disagree

	SA	SA	A	UD	D	SD
Publics seek information on services and products offered in the department through social media						
Through use of social media, the department gives updates on services and products						
Our public relations office research and scans through social media to find on publics attitudes/opinions						
social media is used by pros to interact with publics						
social media is used to research on better ways of relating with the public by PROs						
Departmental meetings focus on feedback from social media channels						
PR practitioners spend more time reviewing and writing on						

social media platform than other tasks						
PR in future will need to take courses on social media						

NB: Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX

**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STAFF OF DEPARTMENT OF
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION**

This interview seeks to explore the benefits of government public relations use of social media at public relations department of ministry of information

1. Which tools of social media are used in your public relations practice in the PR department?

2. What are the factors (reasons) that make you as a PR section to use social media?

3. Are type of information do you pass to the following publics?

External..... Internal.....

4. What are the public relations activities carried out by the use of social media in the section and how often?

5. Do you get inquiries or feedback through social media? If yes, which modes are most preferred? Can you explain why?

6. How much of your time do you spend on social media compared to other tasks? Why?

7. How can you relate use of social media and your effectiveness as a PR professional? If not, why?

