

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM



**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE – A
STUDY OF SECURITY AGENCIES IN GHANA**

BY

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AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original research and hard work and that no part of it has been presented for another M.A. in this institution or elsewhere



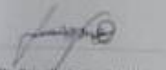
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CERTIFICATION

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



Dr. Priscilla Tetteh Oduro
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Date

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my dear, Mother Margret Winful

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ABSTRACT

The research examines how public relations practitioners with the security agencies in Ghana are using social media, their perceptions of these media as communication tools; and the impact and implications that this new media has had on the public relations practice. Using a mixed methods approach and a cross-sectional survey design, 120 respondents from the general public and 5 public relations officers of the five security agencies were sampled.. Respondents from the public were sampled using simple random sampling while the purposive technique was used to sample the public relations officers. The study data was analysed using Descriptive Statistics and findings indicate that a number of security agencies in Ghana use social media in their public relations efforts. The public relations departments of these organizations use social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Findings also showed Social media's speed and ease of use were cited by all respondents as a major factor in the adoption of public relations by security agencies. Findings further revealed that security agency public relations units have achieved goals such as enhancement in reputation, quick circulation of information and quick feedback mechanism. The study concluded that social media has indeed had an impact on public relations practices irrespective of the organisation and has further changed the way that public relations unit communicate. It was thus recommended that the public relations unit of the security agencies should have a team which constantly monitors social media to ensure that information falsification are curtailed and if possible the perpetrators arrested. Also, the public relations unit should not use social media solely as a means of communicating with the public. Finally, the public relations units should have specially dedicated numbers or hotlines where the needs and queries of the public would be responded to on 24 hour basis.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Improvements in technologies and integrated technologies have played an essential role in adding ease to the way people communicate with each other (Lica & Tuta, 2011; Margalit, 2014). While the changes generated by “new” technology have presented various opportunities in the field of communication, these fast-paced transformations demand prompt and intelligent adaptation in order to continue the efficient flow of information to its publics (Elliott, 2011; Macario, Ednacot, Ullberg & Reichel, 2011). Among the various communication professions that are faced with the challenges and opportunities of change due to technological advancements is public relations (henceforth, PR) (Berkowitz, 2007; Elliott, 2011; Taylor & Kent, 2010; Supa, 2014).

The potential impacts of social media on PR practices have led the Public Relations Society of America, the industry’s largest organization, to consider the redefinition of public relations (Elliott, 2011). Supa (2014) claims that social media have changed “the purposes of public relations, or its strategic value to organizations” (para 6). Since its inception, PR has relied on traditional media to communicate with the public and its target audience. However, social media have allowed PR professionals direct access to their audiences through interactive and two-way conversation (Elliott, 2017).

As such, there is now a transformation of for instance, the delivery of press release directly to the audience (Elliott, 2017; Vorvoreanu, 2018). While PR continues to rely on traditional media platforms, such as newspapers, television and radio to communicate with its target

audience, the increasing popularity of social media among the publics has brought an array of challenges and changes that have the potential to impact the future of the profession (Darnowski & Wright, 2010; Elliott, 2011; Supa, 2014; Taylor & Kent, 2010).

The consistent advancements in social media have provided a two-way interactive communication, allowing PR specialists to create dialogue between the organization and its public, instead of the one-way communication model based on interaction between journalist and editors (Berkowitz, 2007; Elliott, 2011). As such, social media have the potential for PR specialists to access new communication tools to reach their audience directly while shifting the purpose and usage of traditional media (Vorvoreanu, 2018). These trends are also evident in Ghana where various organizations have resulted to the use of social media as a means of enriching their public relations practice. Djabanor (2019) analysed the use of social media in the telecom industry. Her findings indicated that the two main telecom firms, MTN and Vodafone used twitter extensively to reach out to its customers. A comparison of both telecom companies showed that MTN Ghana practiced a balanced two-way communication which was likely to lead to the formation of a quality organisation-public relationship. On the contrary, Vodafone Ghana seemed to lack the needed interaction and engagement on their page to help build strong relationships with their publics (Djabanor, 2019).

Subject to the same theme Nartey, Akwensivie and Adjapong (2020) conducted a study to study were to investigate public relations practices in private universities in Ghana and to identify the challenges faced by the public relations unit of private universities. The study revealed that public relations do not perform their roles effectively in the private universities because they lack qualified staff and logistics to enable them perform effectively. The findings again showed that public relations units of the private universities were not represented at the council which is the highest decision-making body in the universities to

enable them disseminate timely management decisions to the university's publics. Okyere(2019) on his part examined how PR in the Western region relied on social media platforms (SMPs) in the promotion of beach resorts in Western Region of Ghana. His findings of this study are congruent with extant studies which revealed that the adoption of SMPs to promote beach resorts is beneficial to both managers and visitors of tourism destinations.

As seen none of these studies focused on the PR of the security agencies or how social media influences the work of the PR unit of the main security agencies in Ghana. This present work attempts to increase the understanding of the impact of social media on the public relations practice. The study will also investigate the impact that social media has had on how public relations practitioners communicate and the modes of social media platforms that are used by public relations units of the security agencies of the country.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Public Relations industry has faced dramatic changes in the past few years in terms of new technology and media channels as well as new opportunities for communicating with clients and businesses. Evidence suggests that the main reason for this is the emergence of social media networking which enabled consumers to easily and quickly engage in a two-way communication process with companies (Moustakas, 2015; Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011; Iliyana 2012). The rise in the use of social media around the world has led to the introduction of social media into many public relations practices including security agencies.

It is unarguably true that social media is growing at an incredibly rapid pace, it is therefore important to analyze the impact that social media have had on the public relations practice, as

well as how the security agencies are incorporating this new media into their communication strategies. The security agencies in Ghana consist of the Ghana armed forces (Army, Navy, AirForce), Immigration Service, Fire Service, Police Service and the Prisons service. Security agencies by the nature of their businesses are to ensure that any information given to the public to consume is of best public interest and for public safety, however, the popularity of social media platforms has limited their ability to control the volume of information circulated to the public. Also, the growth of social media presents a set of challenges including falsification of advertisements by fraudsters. These fraudsters use social media sites to advertise various scams to large audiences, and posts might include anything from the security service. In some cases, the security agencies are quick to respond before people fall victims to such adverts.

Moreover, most extant studies on social media and public relations have been conducted in developed countries (e.g, Kreon, 2016; Martens, 2020; Keleli, 2021) resulting in limited representation of developing country perspectives in the literature. The few studies conducted in Ghana on the subject include the works of Dornyo (2014), and Mahama (2020). Though valuable, these earlier studies focused on other sectors and specific social media platforms. To address these gaps, the current study focuses on multiple social media platforms and the five main security agencies in the country in order to provide added insight to the literature. As such, the key question to be answered is how do the security agencies use social media to interact with the public especially in times of conflicts and public tension. This study aims to examine how public relations practitioners with the security agencies in the country are using social media as well as the impact and implications that this new media has had on the public relations activities/strategies.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Generally, the purpose of the study is to examine the role of social media in public relations practice with special emphasis on the five (5) main security agencies of Ghana. Specifically, the study seeks:

1. To identify the modes of social media platforms that are used by public relations units of security agencies
2. To assess the factors that determine the preference of social media tools employed in public relations practice by the security agencies.
3. To examine how the use of social media has enhanced the achievement of public relations objectives of the security agencies.
4. To assess perceptions of the general public regarding the use of social media by the PR unit of the security agencies.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the objectives of the study the following research questions have been designed;

1. What are the modes of social media platforms that are used by public relations officers of security agencies in the country?
2. How has the use of social media enhanced the achievement of public relations objectives of the security agencies in the country?
3. What are the factors that determine the preference of social media tools employed in public relations practice by the security agencies?
4. To what extent does the public trust information on social media regarding the activities of the security agencies?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study provides insights into the role of social media as a communication tool and its influence on public relations strategies of the security agencies in Ghana. The study will also serve as a resource material for future research students who will like to pursue a study on this topic and will provoke further studies. Also, it will serve as a guide for both PR students and PR practitioners and give them a research understanding of what social media brings to the PR practice. Moreover, the study aims to be a source of information to PR practitioners on how to actively develop their social media to be interactive for the benefits of their organizations and their publics.

The research also stands to expand current discourse on social media use by the security agencies and organizations. Furthermore, the results of the study will inform policy decisions, including serving as a source of reference for other researchers in the subject area. The study will also contribute to PR literature by providing insightful research findings on social media as mechanisms for PR policy communication. It also aims to add to existing literature on the use of social media in PR in Ghana.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on the Public relations unit of the five main government security agencies in Ghana consists of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) (Army, Navy, Air Force), Immigration Service (GIS), Fire Service, Police Service and the Prisons Service. The study also focuses on the extent to which PR practitioners of security agencies in Ghana can employ the use of

social media platforms as a part of their communication tool, which tool to use, and to which of the functions (media relations, internal/ external communication, management or government) of PR can it be applied.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

This thesis comprises of five chapters. The first chapter of the study (Chapter One) is the introduction to the study. The introduction addresses the background of the study, research problem and study objectives, research questions and significance. Chapter Two (literature review) comprises of relevant findings from existing literature. Chapter Three presents the research tools and mode of data collection to facilitate the study. It further outlines the sources of data, type of data, population, and sample selection techniques. The research design and data analysis techniques are also clearly defined. Chapter four presents an analysis and discussion of the findings from the administered research instrument. The purpose of this chapter is to present the results from the data analyzed and draw inferences from the study findings. The final chapter (Chapter Five) includes the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to review existing theories and concepts related to the theme under review. The chapter precedes with a theoretical framework and further explores both the concept of social media and public relations. An attempt is made by the study to highlight the importance of social media to Public Relations as well as the role of social media in public relations monitoring. The chapter further identifies the seven functional blocks of social media and concludes by conducting an empirical review.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purpose of this study there are four main underlining theories adopted and examined.

The theories include the;

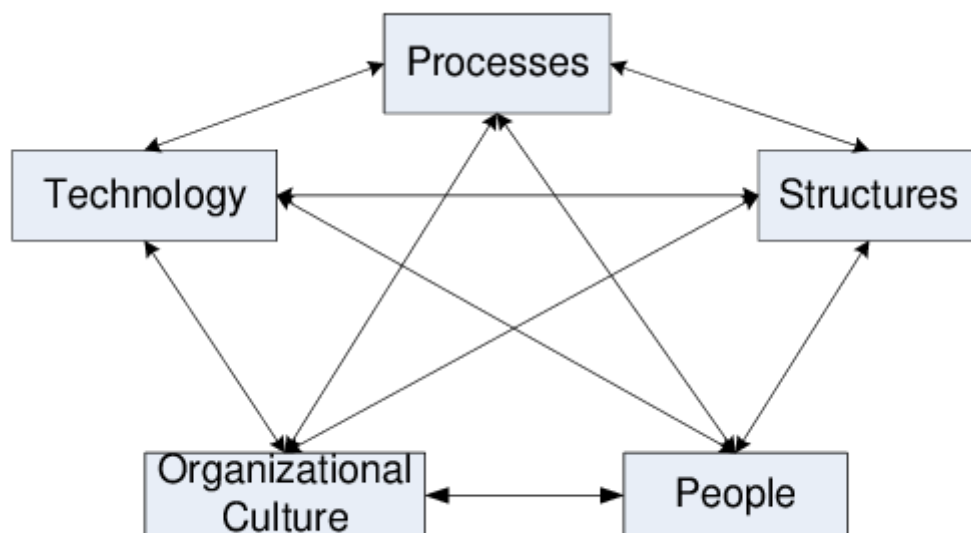
- The Theory of Technological Determinism (TTD)
- Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)
- Theory of Social Presence (TSP)
- The Media Richness Theory (MRT)

2.2.1 The Theory of Technological Determinism (TD)

The theory of Technological Determinism (TD) relates to the studies conducted by Marshall McLuhan who states that we are living in a new age of technology that has never been experienced before. Studying media and culture in England, McLuhan found himself trying to decipher the media environment that surrounded him. The people that lived through the

inventions of the phonetic alphabet, the printing press, and the telegraph saw drastic improvements in the way people were able to communicate. Sometimes known as the “Oracle of the Electronic Age,” McLuhan is telling people that the new electronic media is changing the way people think, act, and feel. McLuhan suspects that the current technological environment, when looked back upon, will be seen as a major turning point in the history of communication.

Fig 2.1: Leavitt’s Extended Model theory of Technological Determinism



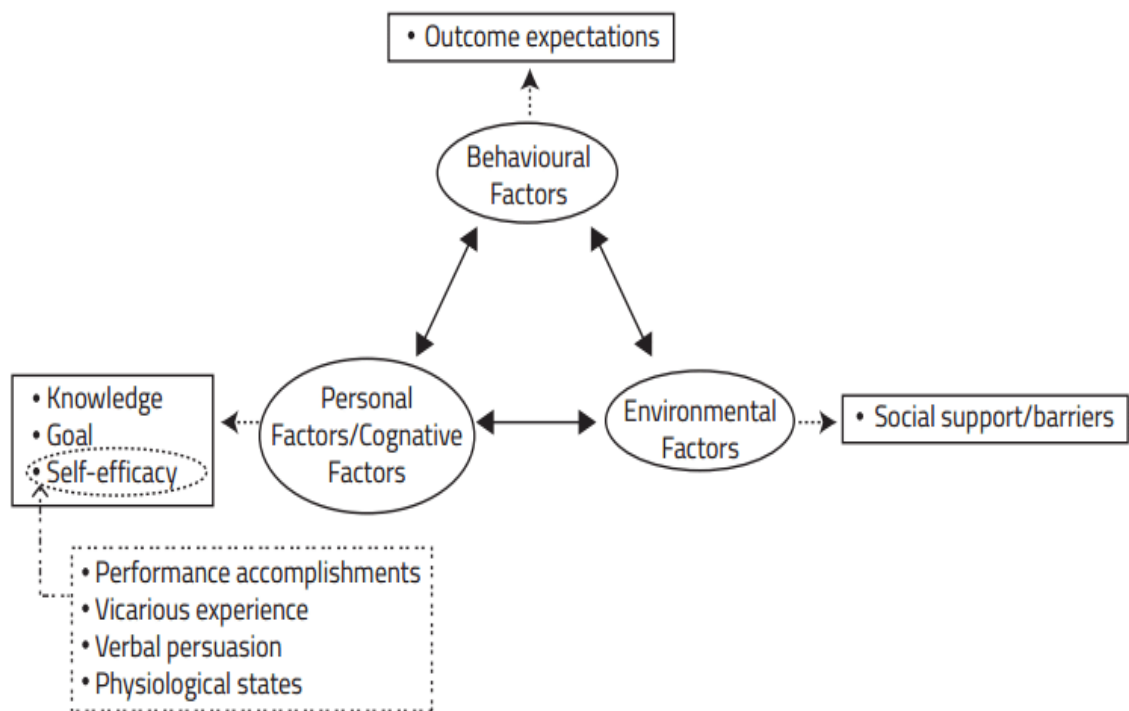
Source: Kovačič et al., (2004),

It is a theory that presumes the media is the key element in mass communication processes that evoked widespread controversy during the 1960s mostly due to the colourful writing of Marshall McLuhan, a professor of English. McLuhan declared that each medium alters our physical environment, imposing on us a particular pattern of perceiving and thinking that controls us to an extent we scarcely suspect (Emery, et al 1991).

2.2.2 Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory according to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) is one of the most frequently cited theories in the studies regarding social media. It provides an explanation for the observational learning and explicit capability of human behaviours. Social Media's effect on the behaviour of people is an example of the domain in which social cognitive theory has been applied.

Fig 2.2: Social cognitive theory



Source: Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007)

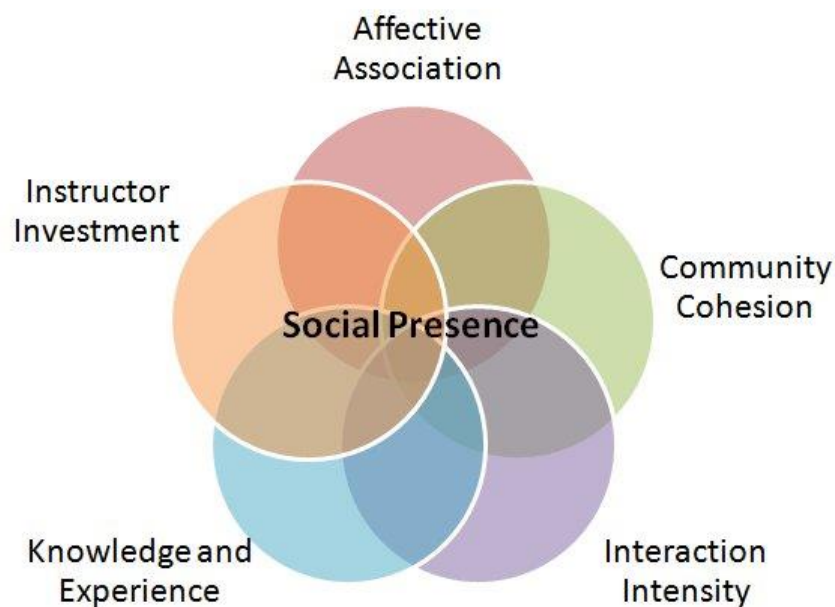
The theory also suggests a causal model to explain human behaviour under the reciprocal interactions among personal (including cognitive, affective, and biological events), behavioural, and environmental factors (Dubois and Gadde 2012). According to the theory, an individual who decides to model another person's values or behaviour, acquired through observational learning, may be encouraged or discouraged to adopt it based on the perceived consequences - reward or punishment (Gummesson 2012).

The theory also suggests a conceptual framework to define the successive processes governing observation all earning, including attention, retention, production, and motivational processes. The attention process represents how people notice, sometimes selectively, another person’s behaviour when exposed to the model. The retention process defines the extent to which people are able to recall memorized behaviour. The production process refers to the practice of behaviour or thought through the learning process. The motivational (or demotivation) process is the underlying attraction toward the learned behaviour or repulsion from it.

2.2.3 Theory of Social Presence

Dubois and Gadde (2012) introduced the social influence model of technology use. According to their proposal, social media influences such sharing news, interactions, marketing, and learning etc. can influence an individual’s behaviour or state of affairs.

Fig 2.3: Theory of Social Presence



Source: Dubois and Gadde (2012)

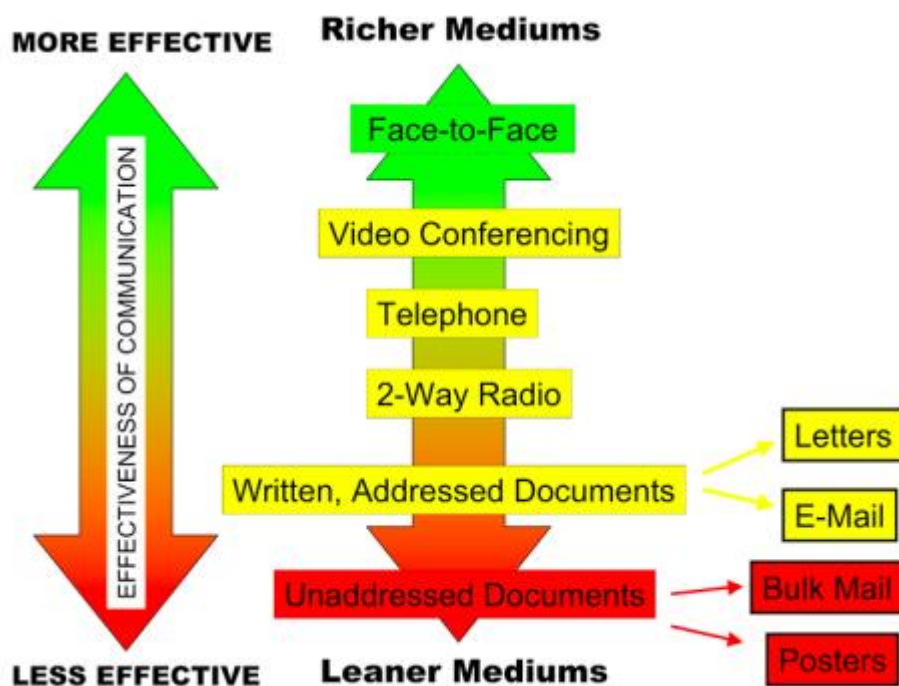
According to social presence theory, use, perceptions and effects of media are anticipated to vary and be, at least partly, socially constructed. The social psychological processes that are used to explain the development of meaning and use patterns with regard to communication technology include social learning (Gillin, 2009) and social information processing (Eisenhardt and Kathleen, 2009). According to the theory coordinated patterns of behaviour are expected to develop based on observations of others' behaviour, consequences of behaviour, and emotional reactions (Eisenhardt, 2009). This type of social influence on one's behaviour can originate from a communication showing others' opinions, behaviours and practices.

2.2.4 The Media Richness Theory

The media richness theory in the opinion of Martin (2009) assumes 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. According to MRT theory, every medium has different capabilities to carry and process information and provide different capacities to facilitate rapid feedback (related to speed of response, velocity of transmission), supporting multiple cues (head nods, eye contact, body language), supporting various data types (audio, video, written) and finally supporting abilities to personalise information (customisability) (Swamy, 2018).

A medium is considered ‘richer’ if it has the potential and the capability to satisfy objective characteristics for immediate response, (b) ability to support multiple cues, (c) ability to support different data formats and (d) supports personalisation (Timmerman & Madhavapeddi 2018; Ferry et al. 2011). This is shown to affect subjective characteristics like interpretations, comments, perspectives in some cases (Ruggiero 2000).

Fig 2.4: The Media Richness Theory



Source: Martin (2009)

According to the theory, different media or forms of communication have different levels of richness in the information that they provide. Media properties can be ranked based on their ability to handle equivocality or uncertainty. The richness of a media is judged using the following criteria:

- ✦ **Capacity to include personal focus:** Every media has different levels of personal focus, especially when a media incorporates more personal feelings and emotions, the

message gets conveyed fully in better terms. For example, communicating face-to-face as compared to communication via email.

✚ **Immediacy of feedback:** A communication is considered complete when the necessary feedback is given; the receipt of feedback is also taken as a way of telling the message is received correctly. Feedback ensures that any mistake in the transmission can be corrected immediately

Immediacy of feedback in a medium refers to the ability of the medium to allow users to quickly respond to the communication that is being received. The medium should be able to support two-way communication.

✚ **Conveyance of multiple cues:** There are varieties of ways in which the medium of communication information is reached and these cues can either be visual or auditory. For example, an advertisement on the evils of smoking can be communicated by using a combination of cues. The background score can be sombre and dull, the visuals could show someone suffering in a hospital bed and the voice over can be in a serious tone.

✚ **Variety of language carried:** This refers to the range of meaning that can be conveyed by the use of language symbols like numbers or by the use of natural language. Numbers indicate precision while natural language helps convey various concepts and ideas.

A medium is said to possess more richness if it has a larger plethora of criteria. Based on this, the media can be ranked in the following descending order in terms of their richness: face-to-face, video systems, audio systems and text systems. Media is, therefore, viewed to be very rich, somewhat rich, lean or very lean.

For example, if a news channel is conducting an investigation on a possible bribery scandal, they would get in touch with possible informants for more inside information. If

the correspondence is done entirely through email, then the informant may hesitate to put down any facts on paper that may incriminate himself or may use carefully constructed sentences and wording to hide facts or information. If a journalist calls him up, there is a possibility of instantly clarifying doubts and picking up any hesitation in the voice. Furthermore, if the interview happens face-to-face, there is an added advantage of observing facial expressions, body language and understanding when the information is being withheld or when the person is lying.

¶ Uncertainty and Equivocality: The need of a communication task is sometimes necessary to reduce uncertainty (involves finding the right answer for a question) or to reduce the equivocality (finding the right question to answer). According to the media richness theory, lean media (emails) was best used to reduce uncertainty and rich media (face-to-face) was best suited for reducing equivocality.

Therefore it can be stated that the theory based on whether there is uncertainty or equivocality in a situation, different communication methods of media should be used based on their levels of richness.

Media richness theory predicts that managers will choose the mode of communication based on aligning the equivocality of the message to the richness of the medium (Klebe, Webster and Stein, 2010). In other words, communication channels will be selected based on how communicative they are. However, often other factors, such as the resources available to the communicator, come into play. Daft and Lengel's prediction assumes that managers are most concentrated on task efficiency (that is, achieving the communicative goal as efficiently as possible) and does not take into consideration other factors, such as relationship growth and maintenance.

Subsequent researchers (Klebe, Webster and Stein, 2010) have pointed out that attitudes towards a medium may not accurately predict a person's likelihood of using that medium over others, as media usage is not always voluntary. If an organization's norms and resources support one medium, it may be difficult for a manager to choose another form to communicate his or her message (King and Xia 1997).

Social presence refers to the degree to which a medium permits communicators to experience others as being psychologically present or the degree to which a medium is perceived to convey the actual presence of the communicating participants. Tasks that involve interpersonal skills, such as resolving disagreements or negotiation, demand high social presence, whereas tasks such as exchanging routine information require less social presence. Therefore, face-to-face media like group meetings are more appropriate for performing tasks that require high social presence; media such as email and written letters are more appropriate for tasks that require low social presence (Turner, 2007).

Another model that is related to media richness theory as an alternative, particularly in selecting an appropriate medium, is the social influence model. How we perceive media, in this case to decide where a medium falls on the richness scale, depends on "perceptions of media characteristics that are socially created," reflecting social forces and social norms at play in the current environment and the context that determines the needed use (Valacich, Paranka, Joey and Nun maker, 1993). Each organization is different in the goal that is trying to be reached and the missions that are trying to be completed. Thus, with different organizational cultures and environments, the way each organization perceives a medium is different and as a result, the way each organization uses media and deems media as more or less rich will vary.

Communicators also consider how personal a message is when determining the appropriate media for communication. In general, richer media are more personal as they include nonverbal and verbal cues, body language, inflection, and gestures that signal a person's reaction to a message. Rich media can promote a closer relationship between a manager and subordinate. The sentiment of the message may also have an influence on the medium chosen. Managers may want to communicate negative messages in person or via a richer media, even if the equivocality of the message is not high, in order to facilitate better relationships with subordinates. On the other hand, sending a negative message over a leaner medium would weaken the immediate blame on the message sender and prevent them from observing the reaction of the receiver (Klebe, Webster and Stein, 2010).

As current business models change, allowing more employees to work outside the office, organizations must rethink the reliance on face-to-face communication. Furthermore, the fear of more lean channels must be rid of. In this current context, managers must decide through trial and errors which medium is best used for various situations, namely an employee that works from the office vs. an employee that works outside the office. Business is being conducted on a global scale. In order to save money and cut back on travel time, organizations must adopt new media in order to stay up-to-date with business functions in the modern times.

2.3 SOCIAL MEDIA: AN EXPLORATION

2.3.1 Concept of Social Media

When many people think of social media, they think of Facebook and Twitter. However, social media do not just include social networking sites, but also blogs, forums, message boards, photo sharing, podcasts, RSS (really simple syndication), search engine marketing, video sharing, Wikis, social networks, professional networks, and micro-blogging sites

(Wright and Hinson, 2009). As stated by Wright and Hinson (2009) and reported by the International Association of Business Communicators, “more than half of all Internet users have joined a social network, social networks have become the number one platform for creating and sharing content and nearly 75 percent of all Internet users have read a blog” (Young, 2009).

Although social media are impacting the way many organizations communicate and more and more people are becoming active with these new channels, the definition of what social media encapsulates is undetermined due to the rise of many different forms. No two people are defining this media the same way. A number of books have explored how blogs, social media and other new technologies are changing the way organizations communicate with strategic publics such as employees, customers, stockholders, communities, governments and other stakeholders. Weber (2007) suggests the communications world is dramatically moving in a digital direction and those who understand this transformation will communicate much more effectively than those who do not.

Scott (2008. p.8) believes, “one of the coolest things about the Web is that when an idea takes off, it can propel a brand or a company to seemingly instant fame and fortune”. Scott also points out that although communicating via the Web usually is free - as opposed to purchasing space through traditional advertising only a small number of public relations practitioners are effectively using blogs and other social media when communicating with their strategic publics. Breakenridge (2009) believes powerful new social media tools offer unprecedented new opportunities in a day when most traditional methods of communication will not reach many audiences; much less convince them to do anything.

2.3.2 Types of social media

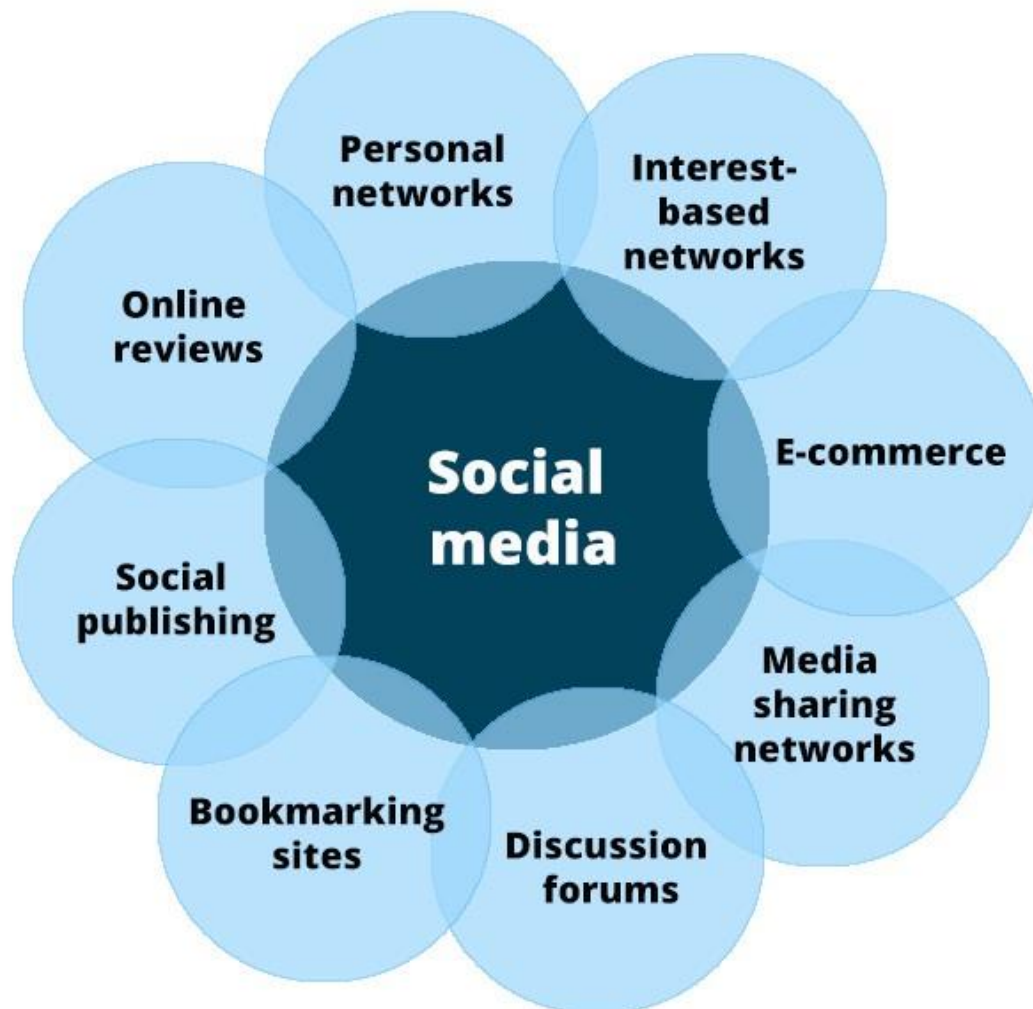
Social media is classified into these categories: Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, podcasts, pictures and video. Since social media represent a young and emerging set of technologies there are many different thoughts and opinions when it comes to categorization. With the availability of so many social media sites, obviously some receive much more web traffic than others. For example, popular social networking sites such as Facebook (www.facebook.com), MySpace (www.myspace.com), and popular video sharing site YouTube (www.youtube.com) all are ranked by web information service on the list of the world's most accessed websites. Wikipedia is a free, internet-based, online 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 & Haenlein, 2010). Instant messaging that are most commonly used all over the world nowadays are WhatsApp, Snapchat and messenger. They have been categorized as social media too because of the level of interactivity. Therefore, this part informs that social media will be used in this study in the sense of networking,

interactivity and information sharing like photos, videos and notes. It also shows how these media intertwine together.

Fig 2.5: Eight (8) Types of social media



Source: Butros, (2021)

2.3.1 The Seven Functional Blocks of Social Media

A key issue among practitioners is that some do not exactly know how social media works or know how to use it correctly. In relation to this fact, Kietzmann et al. (2011) addressed seven functional blocks of social media that apply to all users across any given platform. This section of social media consists of identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships,

reputation and groups. With each of these groups, when used correctly, social media's full potential can be brought about for individual or group benefits. The first block, identity, deals with how users reveal themselves in a social media setting. Most of the information disclosed in this block is personal characteristics of the users such as age, name, gender, profession, and other information that represents them (Kietzmann et al., 2011). This identity that is formed, generally happens through expression of what a person likes, dislikes, feels and thinks whether it is done consciously or unconsciously (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Considering that social media is a medium for communication, it would only make sense that conversation would be one of the functional blocks addressed. This refers to the way in which user's communication in a social media setting, either as a group user or an individual. People communicate daily, using social media for a variety of purposes, often to, obtain information on important topics or to stay in touch with friends and family (Kietzmann et al., 2011). The third block mainly deals with the dissemination of information by the users and groups based on what each think is relevant. Sharing is one of the key facets of social media, but each medium has a different intention (Kietzamann et al., 2011). For example, Facebook is based on status updates of users and groups whereas Twitter is for short bits of information and links to information or video. YouTube on the other hand, presents video representation of information that can be presented to the public.

Social media allows for constant connectivity even when individuals are nowhere near each other. This gives ease of access to users to know when others are accessible and when they are not. In Facebook, users know if someone is online if a green dot appears next to their name stating "available" or a red dot signaling they are "unavailable." Constant connectivity

allows for constant communication on the go; thus users can access and converse about information at anytime during the day with each other or as a group community.

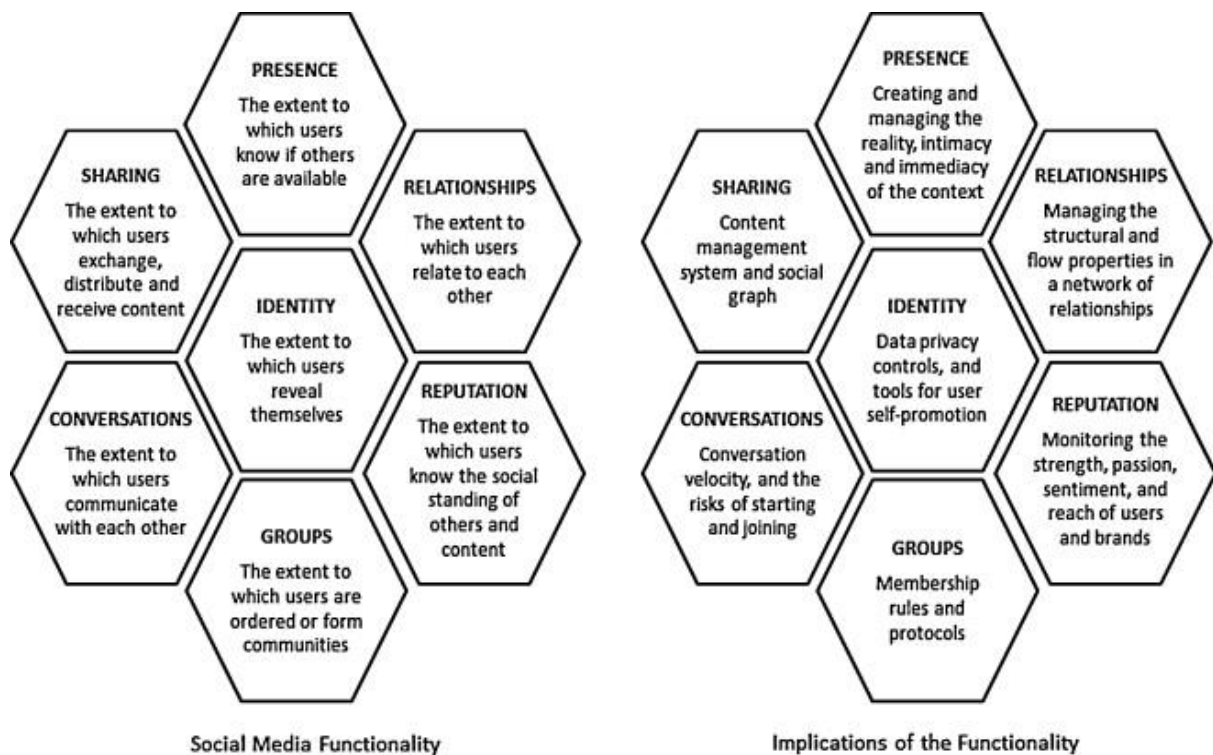
The relationship, which is the fifth block, does not readily apply to group communication. Relationships, as far as social media goes, means “two or more users have some form of association that leads them to converse, share objects of sociality, encounter, or simply just list each other as a friend or fan (Kietzamann et al., 2011). Kietzaman et al.(2011) continue with the notion that sites such as Twitter and YouTube do not value relationships as much as other sites do. For example, Facebook is based on the interaction of users commenting on posts and engagement in conversation, therefore it can be labeled as amore personable platform of communication.

Reputation, on the other hand, applies to most social media sites in that it is used to identify the standing of a person and/or group. For example, there could be two or more Facebook/Twitter pages for an organization, but typically the one with more “likes” or “fans” is the official account. This, in turn, gives the page higher reputation value in that it is the main page for gaining information on a particular topic. Organizations need to always keep the public aware of what channels are official, so that information is not misconstrued. If an unofficial page is perceived to be official by the public and disseminates false or skewed information, this could aid in the damage of an organization’s image.

The last functional block of social media is that of groups. This function allows for users to come together as a community for a common goal or purpose. Facebook and Flickr for example have the ability to create two different kinds of groups that people can be a part of (Kietzamann et al., 2011). The first is open to the public so anyone is able to join (e.g. official

news organizations) and the other, which a user must be invited to join (e.g. birthday groups, political party strategy campaigning pages). Figure 2 shows the functions of social media along with the implication of each function. With the growth and expansion of social media in society in particular fields such as public relations, it is necessary for the academic community to analyze them for patterns that could emerge to help predict future of certain channels of social media in the professional world.

Fig 2.6: Social media functionality and implications



Source: Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre. (2011)

2.4 PUBLIC RELATIONS: AN EXPLORATION

2.4.1 Concept of Public Relations

Public relations helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communications, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and the public; it

informs the management of problems or issues, helps management to be kept informed on and responsive to public opinion, it defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve public interest, helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends, and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools (Harlow, 1976, p.36).

2.4.2 Public Relations and Social Media

According to Larry Weber (2009), as stated by Wright & Hinson (2009), “The communications world is dramatically moving in a digital direction and those who understand this transformation will communicate much more effectively than those who do not.” Public relations practitioners are in the business of communicating with publics and therefore must understand this transformation in order to communicate effectively. However, due to the fast-paced growth of social media, it is difficult for these professionals, as well as the universities training future professionals, to keep current. Blogs, for example, are increasing in popularity because they give independence from traditional editors and media gate keeping (Pavlik, 2007).

The use of blogs as a means to gather information is increasing as well as the posting of blogs to better position oneself in the eyes of the public. In the past, public relations practitioners were responsible for packaging content and then distributing it to the media in hopes of being published. Today, practitioners are still responsible for packaging the content; however, they are now able to publish the content themselves through blogs, social networks and other online media outlets. Practitioners still send information to the traditional media, but they are now also able to talk directly to the public, view the public’s responses, and act accordingly. For example, when a consumer tweets about a bad experience, the company can view these comments and respond immediately to provide more direct service to its customers.

2.4.3 Importance of Social Media to Public Relations

The new technologies currently embraced by PR practitioners are mainly social media sites such as Instagram, LinkedIn, 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 potential effect of the social networking sites on PR is immense. Yin in 1994 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 foregoing, the use of social media is on the increase among organizations in the world, 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, going by what various scholars refer to be the concerns/benefits in line with new trends in the Public relations practice.

2.4.4 Social Media in Public Relations Monitoring

There is no denying that social media can be used for both virtuous and dreadful things. Once such case showing social media's terrible side was that of a toddler being ridiculed by a daycare's employees by the use of Instagram (Campbell & Levs, 2013). What must be kept in perspective is that these technological tools can be used as defensive tactics just as they can be used in an offensive manner. Organizations familiar with the use of these social media sites are aware that these new channels of communication have unlimited capability in monitoring the communication of an organization internally as well as externally.

Bush and Glazier (2013) called attention to three segments of monitoring for social media that can be used for by companies who incorporate this new technology properly. Specifically, manual searches, acting and digesting articles can be used across the spectrum in the PR field regardless if a practitioner is looking at a product crisis, branding or corporate communications strategies. "A practitioner should be delegated as a blogger for the company before a crisis to monitor issues and openly engage with others as a self identified representative of the organization" (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011, p. 113).

The monitoring practice of manual yields inestimable information about what others see regarding a product or brand name. Depending on the situation, whether an employee is shouting profanity while transporting goods to a client or worse, an employer should welcome the notification, so that the issue can be addressed (Bush & Glazier, 2013). Bush

and Glazier explained that these searches on social media sites, regardless of the channel (Twitter, Facebook, etc.), may seem to be fruitless, but can be surprisingly beneficial.

Another factor with social media is the option to observe what is going on about an organization with the option to act on issues at hand. Practitioners now have the power to moderate outcomes of particular issues that the organization's publics are dissatisfied with at any given moment throughout the day. Being able to identify issues for address is equaled in importance by the speed with which an organization can address the problems. Journalists in mainstream media remain an important public for most PR practitioners, whether their specialty is health communication, management or crisis communication. Social media have grown in importance as a tool to reach all publics, including mainstream journalists and writers. They have been useful in time management, ease of access and have enriched PR messaging (Bajkiewicz, Kraus, & Hong, 2011).

The last form of social media moderation relates to that of digesting articles that can be found online with social media. Whether an organization is focused with Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook or Instagram, all of these variations of social media have corporate pages if not reporter fan pages that can be "followed" or "liked" to obtain information. Pages such as PRAL Acadiana, Fox News, CNN News, and various other local and national organizations disseminate information to their followers constantly whether it is on a monthly, weekly or daily basis. Other than liking a page, practitioners may investigate for collaborations in strategy between the organization's social media and online presence (Bajkiewicz, Kraus, & Hong, 2011). Along with the information given, what do the comments or tweets say about the issue being addressed? Are these current events viral?

What are the current influential topics? “Assimilating and learning from other organizational coverage provides the knowledge needed to deliver a vital perspective to clients, fine-tune messaging, and angle crafting in articles (Bush & Glazier, 2013). With the growth of social media, there are many channels an organization can choose from including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Myspace, and others. As more forms of social media rise, public relations practitioners need to understand which of these various tools work for them and in what situations are these tools used more efficiently (Paine, 2009). Schultz, Utz & Göritz (2011) suggested that research should not just concentrate on the content of communication but explore other media and even the use of combined media. With multiple channels of social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) organizations might find incorporation of more than one of these tools to be more efficient in information dissemination. Some social media channels have already found ways to feed into one another by the posting of photos and video on one that will post to another simultaneously (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram).

The invention of social media has completely altered the way an organization communicates and is involved with its various publics (Yang & Lim, 2009). “By posting information to sites such as Facebook and Twitter, a company is able to bypass traditional media channels, solicit instant feedback, and thus engage in a two-way communication directly with the audience in real time” (Muralidharan, Dillistone & Shin, 2011, p. 228). There has been an increased proficiency in the dissemination of information through the various channels of social media to an organization’s publics (Larisey et al., 2009); however, information distribution is not the issue at hand as far as crisis communication is concerned.

Many public relations practitioners are already incorporating social media into their online strategies, but there needs to be more investigation into what channels are best for the field rather than measuring its fan popularity (McCorkindale, 2010). Now, online communication

platforms are emerging faster than before, some organizations may be seeking out multiple technologies for the dissemination of information, where as others may try to estrange one more to escape the choice overload. DiStaso, McCorkindale & Wright (2011) found that the manner in which society consumes information is the driving force behind social media, in turn this influence how and why their participants used social media in their companies. They continue by explaining that in order for proper communication among the stake holders in the organization, information must be relayed where the stakeholders are residing.

2.5 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

PR practitioners in recent time have incorporated social media as a communication tool in their day to day discharge of their duties simply because of the enormous benefits it presents to the practice. Bhargava (2010) established that there are considerable variations in the use and application of the different online tools in public relations practice. This discrepancy according to him was found to have been influenced by the area of work and experience of the practitioners along with their knowledge of the Internet and the organisational environment they operated in. As evidenced in the reviewed literature, most of these professionals are comfortable with Facebook, Twitter and in some cases YouTube. The subsequent section focus on how practitioners think about social media and its influence on the PR practice.

2.5.1 Social Media and Communication Strategies

Komodromus (2015) in a study conducted in Cyprus, argues that PR practitioners in Cyprus prefer to have interactive specialists and groups responsible for communicating to their

stakeholders through social media and the Internet. According to Komodromus, organizations of all types have increasingly been adopting new communication strategies, incorporating social media tools in their communication strategies, both when planning online activities and when evaluating the outcomes of these activities. Most of the practitioners reported the use of the Internet and social media tools in organizations will inevitably grow with the passage of time.

2.5.2 Social Media and Public Relations Practice

On the other hand, Lee & Low (2013), findings revealed that social media especially (Facebook) has been accepted as a formal communication channel in PR agencies due to its popularity, perceived ease of use, and considered as an advantage for them to do free publicity where information can be published with minimum cost and serves as an extra platform to get in touch with their external audience. But they admitted that with all the advantages that come with the usage of social media has its own challenge. This goes to buttress the fact that social media can be an effective communication tool for a PR practitioner if managed properly. Ugwu (2012) also found that the peculiarities of the Nigerian social, economic and political climate have unique implications for PR, but if professionals continue to strategize around the challenges of playing in the social media space, social media will become the most favourite PR tool in the years ahead.

Additionally, Oneya (2010) stated that PR practitioners interviewed admitted to social media having highly impacted or influenced communication, especially in the way in which their organizations handled external communication. He further stated that social media provides a cost-free forum for the expression of ideas, information and opinion. Wright & Hinson (2009) also highlights that blogs and social media has also impacted massive public relations

thus promoting instant feedback, thereby agreeing with Oneya (2010). Social media increases the immediacy of communication and offer platforms for public view on various issues, and enables reaching new younger audience that traditional media could not have, Wright & Hinson (2009).

2.5.3 Social Media and Corporate Reputation

Scott (2011) said it provides the way people share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationships online. Joo and Teng (2016) opined that social media is a platform that connects people together by ignoring the geographical factors and also the opportunity to produce and share with the community used by millions of people on daily bases. Cheng (2019) also believe that use of social media helps enhance the presentation, communication, and performance of PRs. However, he said abusing or misusing of social media may lead to a lot of misunderstandings among one's target audience and increase the difficulties for the public to find out what information can be trusted and where to find it, which may directly affect the revenue.

On the other hand, Cheng (2019) said knowing which tools will deliver your message to the right audience is critical to the success of PR campaign or content. Kristan (2015) also clearly indicates that the public relation practitioners are using social media for their professional use. However, the medium is new and the PR community may take some more time to adopt and modify it as per their special needs. The research could not agree more because most practitioners are not conversant with social media usage and most at times relay on the IT personnel to assist them.

2.5.4 Social Media, Information Dissemination, and Crime Management

A study carried out by Martin (2009), established that social media has become an important source of news. While the credibility of some sources can clearly be contested, news channels tweet or give updates on significant happenings all over the world. Their availability on social networks makes news more accessible. Additionally, news quickly gets passed around the networks in ways never experienced before. Tuten (2008) concludes that social media has furthered interaction by such a massive scale that is hard not to notice it. It allows people to keep in touch in a more regularly, and sometimes, more intimately, than was ever before because of time and space constraints. People cities or continents apart can keep in touch so effortlessly, creating an opportunity to experience different cultures.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the study discusses in detail the assumptions and procedures that guided the study (Creswell, 2003). The chapter details the type of research design adopted for the study and justifies its adoption. It further identifies the population, sampling procedure and sample size. The chapter also provides the source of data and the data collection procedure. This is preceded by the research instrument used in the data collection for this study. The chapter concludes with the data analyses technique used for the study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study uses the exploratory research design to gather data and explore the concept of social media and how it influences the work of the PR unit of the five main security agencies in Ghana and the extent to which the process is effective in reaching the public. The purpose of employing this method is to describe the nature of a situation, as it exists at the first time of the study and to explore the cause(s) of a particular phenomenon (Van Wyk, 2012). The researcher opted to use this kind of research considering the desire of the researcher to obtain first hand data from the respondents so as to formulate rational and sound conclusions and recommendations for the study.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Two general approaches namely, quantitative and qualitative have been widely used in social science research. However, Creswell (2014) advances a third approach – mixed-methods; and points to the fact that the three approaches are not discrete. While quantitative and qualitative approaches represent different ends of a continuum, Creswell (2014) argues that a mixed method resides in the middle of this continuum since it incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Mixed methods refer to the gathering and analysis of data using a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single investigation. The approach projects the notion that dependence on a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, improves the quality of research and offers a more detailed understanding of the research issue compared to when a single approach is used.

Since this study seeks to examine the use of social media in PR practice among the security agencies in Ghana as well as assess the public's perceptions of social media usage by these agencies, the mixed methods approach was considered suitable because mixing data sets can give a better understanding of the problem and yield more complete evidence – the investigator gains both depth and breadth. Further, amalgamating statistics with thematic approaches can help avoid over-reliance on the former and can also capture "soft-core views and experiences" (Jogulu and Pansiri, 2011) and the subjective factors necessary to elucidate complex social situation.

3.4 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

A research population is simply a well-defined collection of individuals or objects known to have similar properties or characteristics. Zikmund and Babin (2008) state that all individuals or objects within a certain population usually possess a common, binding characteristics or

traits. Based on this definition the population of the study is composed of the PR personnel of all the security agencies in the country. The security agencies in Ghana consist of the Ghana Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force), Immigration Service, Fire Service, Police Service, and the Prisons service.

3.5. SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Since in most cases not all members of the population may participate in the study, it is prudent to select (sample) some whose view will represent the population. The sample size of a study is defined as a sub-set of the population or the number of units that were chosen from whom data is gathered (Cowlet, 2007). Cowlet (2007) theorizes that the views of the sample, when well selected, can represent that of the entire population to the extent that recommendations or generalization can be made to the entire population based on the view of the sample. For the purpose of the study, five (5) PR officers, one each from the security agencies is chosen to participate in an interview session as a representative of the entire security apparatus in Ghana.

The study employs a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Purposive sampling method is used to sample heads of department of the PR unit of the security agencies to participate in the interview session. This approach was based on who the researcher considers appropriate for the study. Also, for the purpose of quantitative analysis, 120 community members were selected using convenience sampling method to determine their perception of the use of social media by the security agencies to inform the public of relevant information.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.6.1 Source of Data

Every researcher is privileged to two sources of data; these are primary source of data and secondary source of data. The primary data for this study was sourced from the officers of the PR Department as well as the general public.

3.6.2 Research Instruments

For the purpose of this study, the research instrument to be used is a research questionnaire. The content of the questionnaire is based on the objectives of the study, which was outlined in the first chapter of the study. A total of twelve closed-ended questions were designed with alternative responses. This is to allow for easy interpretation, coherence and analysis of data. Meanwhile, the interview guide was also designed based on the objectives of the study as well as pre-existing works.

3.6.3 Validity of the Research Instruments

To help examine the extent to which the survey will help meet the objectives of the study, a pilot survey was carried out to help identify the flaws, challenges or issues that needed further modification or editing before the main field work is embarked on. The pilot survey was conducted using a sample of 20 respondents. The study relied on the convenience sampling method as well in this endeavour.

3.6.4 Administration of the Research Instruments

The research questionnaires were converted to google docs and shared with respondents through email and social media like WhatsApp in order to make it convenient for respondents to react. Google Documents is a free online collaboration tool that allows you to create

documents or spreadsheets and work on them from the cloud. According to Algini (2021) it is a low-cost package of products that enable an individual to create, edit, store and share files with other users online from remote locations and in real-time.

Since the goal was to examine public perception of social media usage of the security agencies it was vital to ensure that respondents were social media users which makes the online survey a suitable strategy. Also, qualitatively, interview guides were used to elicit data from the study respondents. Interview sessions were arranged with departmental heads. Further, the interviews were conducted at times convenient for the respondents and at locations that respondents were comfortable with.

3.7 DATA ANALYSES TECHNIQUES

This research follows similar studies by other authors such as Frimpong et al., (2012), Adomako (2013), Boateng (2016) and Cooper (2017). The primary data collected through the use of questionnaires were first edited and cleansed. Data editing and cleansing entails checking the data for accuracy and completeness. After the editing and cleaning of the data, the responses on the questionnaire were coded. Data coding entails the transformation of the edited raw data into numerical codes so as to facilitate the computerized data analysis.

The coded data were then entered in the computer for analysis. Before the analysis, the correctness of the data input was verified by making sure that that the data entered and stored on the computer files were exactly the same as those on the questionnaires and the coding sheets. After all data entry errors were corrected, the data were summarized using the appropriate statistical tools. The data analysis tool used was the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS version 16) and Microsoft Excel 2007.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The results obtained from the analysis of data are presented and discussed in this chapter. The first section of the chapter presents the biographic details of the respondents. Subsequent sections present respondents' feedback on the relationships between social media, the main security agencies in Ghana and public relations and the extent to which these variables influence each other.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

This section takes a look at the demographic data of the respondents that participated in the research. Respondents for the study were profiled according to gender, age grouping, and educational qualification. The Table 4.1 below provides the results of the demographic statistics of the study participants.

Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Profile	Measurements	Frequency (<i>n</i>)	Percent (%)
<i>Gender</i>	Male	49	32.7
	Female	71	67.3
Total		120	100
<i>Age</i>	18 - 25 years	31	25.8
	26 - 35 years	43	35.8
	36 - 45 years	29	24.2
	Above 45 years	17	14.2
Total		120	100
<i>Educational Qualification</i>	Diploma/Degree	69	57.6

	Professional	37	30.8
	Other	14	11.6
Total		120	100

Based on the content of the table the female respondents dominated by 71 (67.3%) respondents whilst the males followed with 49 (32.7%) respondents. The female respondents were however more younger in age as compared to the males when the age of respondents came up in the questions. Studies (Berry, 2019; Jaye, Shira & Kurt, 2009; Steinbern & Monahan, 2011) however indicate that women are more on social media than men. It is the views of his study that that may have informed a lot of marketers especially fashion and fashions accessories to resort to social media.

The age of the respondents as indicated in the table shows a slight decline in the number of respondents as the age ascends with a majority of 103 respondents representing just about 85.8% of the total number of respondents below 45years. Based on data obtained a majority of 43 (35.85%) respondents indicated that they were in the ages of 26-35 years. Following with a slightly younger age group of 18-25 were 31(25.8%) respondents. Respondents with within the age quartile of 36-45 years were represented by 29 (24.2%) respondents. Finally representing above 60 years were a much smaller number of 10 respondents.

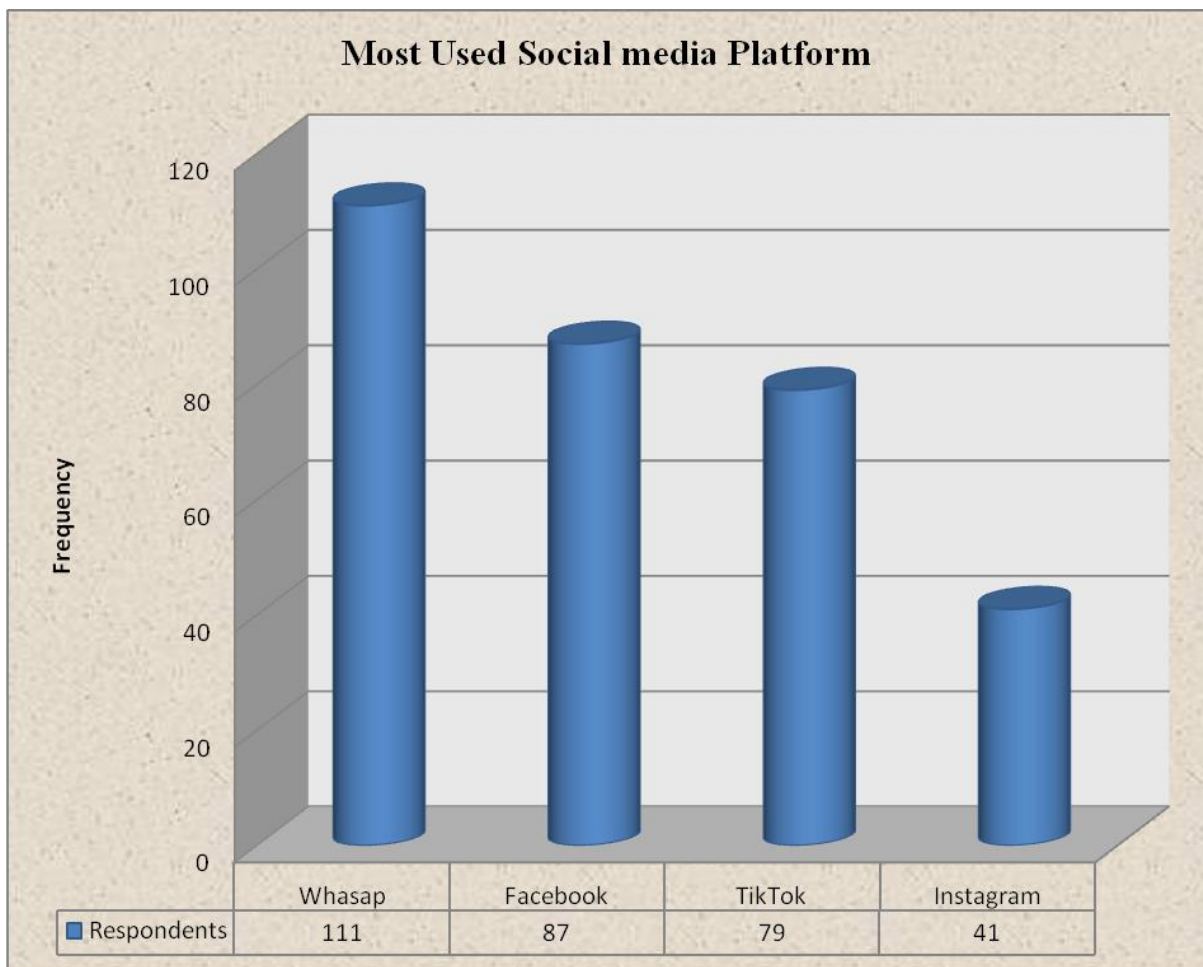
A study by PewResearch centre in 2019 worldwide showed that younger people are into social media than the adult generation. Most of the adults had problem with their phone, lack interest in current trends and had generational gaps issues whereas the younger generation seems to hunger for modern trends and fashion. However, the same study showed that the

adults preferred news from traditional news source whereas the youth preferred news from social media. This study is yet to affirm or oppose these findings. The level of education in general is known to be able to influence disposition towards research and response to research question and to some extent attitude towards social media. As shown a good majority of 69 (57.6%) respondents were diploma/ first/ second degree holders. According to 37 (30.8%) respondents they have attained professional qualifications in various disciplines. Finally, 14 (11.6%) have other qualifications such as certificates in fashion, cakes and pastry, secretaryship and management studies, accounting and draughtsmanship.

4.3 ACCESS TO SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM AND USAGE FREQUENCY

As a criteria to satisfy before participating in the survey respondents were required to indicate if they have used or access to any social media platform. Since all respondents have access to social media platforms respondents detailed which social media platform they use or have access to as followed in figure 4.1 below.

Fig 4.1: Most Used Social Media Platform



Source: Field Survey, 2021

Based on the data obtained a good majority of 111 (24.7%) respondents admitted having access and using whatsapp as their main social media platform. In close following were 87 (19.3%) Facebook users. Details obtained suggested that TikTok which was very new social media application was used by 79 (17.5%) respondents. Next, findings revealed that there

were 41 (9.1%) instagram followers. Social media has had a staggering impact on the practice of public relations since the first weblogs, or blogs, appeared more than a dozen years ago. This has continued and increased as social media developed into a number of different forms including text, images, audio and video through the development of forums, message boards, photo sharing, podcasts RSS (really simple syndication), search engine marketing, video sharing, Wikis, social networks, professional networks and micro-blogging sites. Recent research (Tancer, 2008) says social media have overtaken pornography as the number one use of the Internet.

Based on response received on the previous question on most access social media platform respondents were required by the study to indicate how regular they (respondents) access the platform. Responses obtained have been detailed as followed;

Table 4.2: Social Media Usage Frequency

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very regular	39	32.5
Regular	63	52.5
Not regular	10	8.3
Not very regular	8	6.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As tabulated above a good number of 63(52.5%) concurred that they regularly visited their respective most preferred platforms. This position was complimented by 39(32.5%) others

who admitted that they on very regular occasion accessed their most preferred platforms. On the opposite side were 10(8.3%) who admitted not regularly visiting their most preferred platforms. Finally, 8(6.7%) hinted not visiting on very regular occasion. A critical observation by the researcher showed all these respondents to be above 45 years.

4.4 MOST RECOGNIZED SECURITY AGENCIES

The views of the respondents were sought regarding which government security agency they were aware off. Details obtained are presented in the Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.3: Government Security Agency

Security Agency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ghana Police Service (GPS)	102	29.8
Ghana Armed Forces (GAF)	63	18.4
Ghana Immigration Service (GIS)	61	17.8
Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS)	57	16.7
Ghana Prisons Service (GPS)	59	17.2
Total	342	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As can be observed a good number of 102 (29.8%) were aware of the Ghana Police Service (GPS) as being a government security agency. This is unsurprising considering the role the Police Service plays in our respective communities. Marginally, following were 63 (18.4%) respondents claiming to be aware of the Ghana Armed Forces whilst in close suit were 61 (17.8%) respondents identifying the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) as a government security agency. The Prisons Service (GPS) and Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) were represented by 59 (17.2%) and 57 (16.7%) respondents respectively.

4.5 TRUST AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In pursuance of the objectives of the study respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they trusted information from social media. The responses obtained suggest that respondents were not so confident with information on social media.

Table 4.4: Trust and Social Media

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A great extent	19	15.8
An extent	39	32.5
Not to an extent	43	35.9
Not to a great extent	19	15.8
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As can be noted from Table 4.7 a majority of 43 (35.9%) affirmed to an extent they do not trust information displayed on the social media. To complement the position of these respondents were 19 (15.8%) others who avowed that to a great extent they do not trust information from the social media. On the optimistic side were 39 (32.5%) and 19 (15.8%) who claimed that to an extent and to a great extent they trusted information sourced from the social media. In cognizance with the findings of the study Hse-Yen (2019) argued that false information, uneven quality of information, bias, manipulation, and insufficient control of false information are the main reasons against trusting information on social media.

4.6 Security Agencies, Social Media and Public Relations

The views of the respondents were sought regarding the extent to which it was prudent for the government security agencies to use social media as a tool for public relations. The views of the respondents have been detailed as followed;

Table 4.5: Security Agencies, Social Media and PR

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	39	32.5
No	41	34.2
Somehow	40	33.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As shown in Table 4.8 a good number of 41 (34.2%) disagreed that it was prudent for the security agencies to adopt social media. They explained that due to the nature of their work using social media could cause unnecessary unrest of it if misinterpreted or falsified by criminals. Hence, it would be more appropriate for them to use the traditional media outlets like the newspapers, television and radio and later use social media to complement what was in the traditional media citing an example like the presidential state of the nation address on COVID 19 management.

Meanwhile a lesser number of 39 (32.5%) argued that social media was the right platform to share such information because it was faster, convenient, less expensive and reaches a much more wider audience as compared with the other traditional media. Finally, 40 (33.3%) of the respondents opined that it was somehow prudent provided the necessary precautions have been taken to ensure that the information given out was authentic and would not cause any form of public unrest.

4.7 COMMUNIQUÉ FROM GOVERNMENT SECURITY AGENCY

In furtherance of the research work respondents were required to indicate the last time they observed a communiqué from any of the government security agencies.

Table 4.6: Communiqué from Government Security Agency

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
>3 months	63	52.5
3 months to 6 months	29	24.2
6 Months to 9 months	28	23.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey. 2021

As detailed in Table 4.9 a good majority of 63 (52.5%) admitted having seen on social media press releases and other information related to the security agencies within the last 3 months. Details would later reveal that this was related to the recruitment exercise and its related activities being organised by the security agencies. Next, data obtained showed 29 (15%) were of the view that the last time they observed anything related to the security agencies has been between the last 3 months to 6 months. Data further revealed that there were 28 (23.3%) respondents who identified information related to the security agencies for the past 6 months to 9 months.

4.8 Nature of information on Social Media

To augment their assertion of having seen social media information related to the security agencies respondents were required to indicate the nature of the information seen on the social media platform.

Table 4.7: Nature of information

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Financial management	-	0
Domestic Violence	9	7.5
Health related issues	20	15
Security threats	28	25
Recruitment and vacancy related posts	58	48.3
Others	5	4.2
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

According to a majority of 58 (48.3%) they have seen adverts related to recruitment opportunities with the main security agencies. Marginally following were 28 (25%) respondents admitting having seen social media posts on issues related to security threats issued by the security agencies. Next, findings showed that 20 (15%) respondents have seen health related posts from the security. Domestic violence and others issues were all represented by 9 (7.5%) and 5 (4.2%) respondents respectively.

4.9 Relevance of information on social media related to security agencies

The study sought to determine from respondents the extent to which information displayed by the security agencies were relevant in their decision making process. Details obtained suggest that the information was helpful to the participants.

Table 4.8: Relevance of information

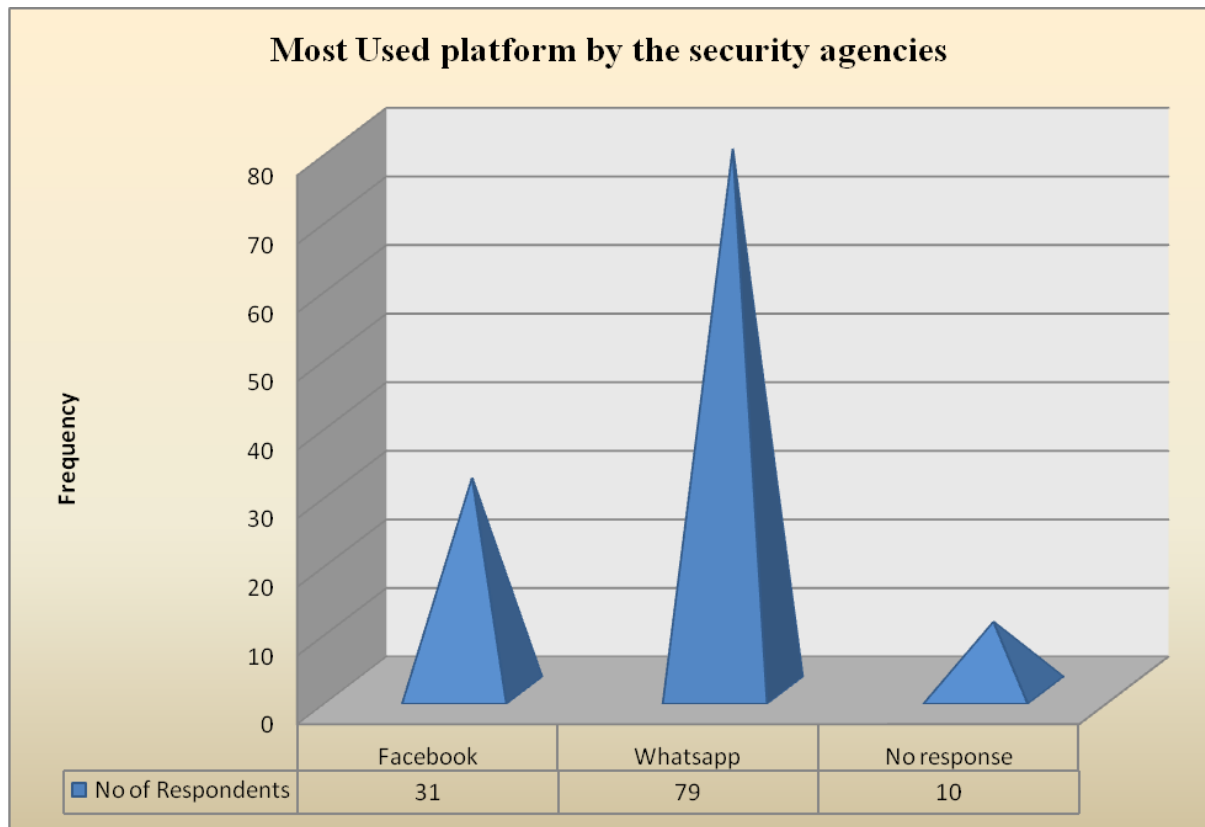
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	73	60.8
No	31	25.8
Somehow	16	13.4
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As can be deduced from Table 4.11 a good number of 73 (60.8%) affirmed that the information displayed by the security agencies was helpful and relevant in their decision making process. They explained that it helped protect them from fraudulent acts as well as informed them of the timeline of events related to the activities of the some of the security agencies. Marginally following were 31 (25.8%) who argued that the information was not helpful and that by the time it was displayed they had been victimised or late in the submission of applications. Finally, 16 (13.4%) pointed out that the information was somehow relevant and timely.

Respondents were probed to provide the platforms which they had seen information related to the activities of the security agencies. Findings suggested that there were 2 main platforms used by the security agencies which confirmed information obtained from the interview session with the public relations department of the security agencies.

Fig 4.2: Most Used platform by security agencies



Source: Field survey, 2021

Based on the data, it is obvious that the chief social media platform used was the Whatsapp (65.8%) platform followed by Facebook (25.8%). There were 10 (8.3%) respondents who could not respond to that question.

4.10 Extent of trust source of information on social media from government security agencies

It is well documented that trust is a significant component of many relations, it can lower transaction costs and risk and that high levels of trust promote investment and growth (Putnam, 2000; Zak & Knack, 2001; Uslaner, 2002). How trust actually is created has been more of an open discussion. In pursuance of the purpose of the study respondents were required to indicate the extent to which the trusted information from their most preferred platforms used by the government security agencies as a means of public relations.

Table 4.9: Trust, social media, security agencies

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	63	52.5
No	41	34.2
Somehow	16	13.3
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As reflected in Table 4.12 a good number of 63 (52.5%) avowed that they trusted information from the security agencies displayed on social media platform. Based on this trust they responded appropriately to the information displayed on social media. Next, the findings of the study revealed that 41 (34.2%) claimed that they do not trust such information while 16 (13.3%) indicated that they somehow trusted information on social media sourced from the security agencies. Monforti & Marichal (2014) studied digital skills and generalized trust in different ethnic groups: Latinos, African Americans and Anglo-Americans in the US. They

found that digital skills were associated with generalized trust for African Americans but not for Latinos or Anglo-Americans.

4.11 Social media platforms being ideal for government security agency

In cognisance with the research objectives respondents view was sought regarding the extent to which they considered the use of social media platform ideal by the public relations unit of the security agencies. Details revealing their position presented in the table below.

Table 4.10: Social media platforms being ideal for PR

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	79	65.8
No	31	25.8
Somehow	10	8.4
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

As indicated in the table good majority of 79 (65.8%) avowed that it was ideal for the public relations unit of the security agencies to use social media as means of reaching the public since it was faster, convenient and reaches a wider audience. Meanwhile, 31 (25.8%) negated that position arguing that information on social media can be falsified or misinterpreted. hence, relying solely on social media as a means of reaching the general public was flawed. Meanwhile, 10 (8.4%) affirmed that it was somehow ideal for the public relations unit to use social media because it is used by most of the youth and reaches more people within the shortest possible time as compared to traditional media.

4.12 Image enhancements

To aid in achieving research objectives the research required respondents to indicate if using social media as a way of reaching out to the public helps in enhancing the image of the security agencies.

Table 4.11: Image enhancements

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	41	34.2
No	62	51.7
Somehow	17	14.1
Total	120	100

Source: Field survey, 2021

As can be observed 62 (51.7%) of the respondent did not agree that it would enhance the image of the security agencies if their public relations unit used social media to as a way of reaching out to the general public. They explained that the reputation has been created already and hence the use of social media would not change any form of notion people have concerning the security agencies.

Opposing this view were 41 (34.2%) other respondents who acknowledged that consistent use of social media by the security agencies helps the public have a better perception of their work. Meanwhile, 17 (14.1%) accented that somewhat the use of social media platforms to keep in touch with the public and respond to queries by the public provides the security agencies a better image.

4.13 Importance of social media to security agency PR

Finally, respondents were asked if they considered social media as being important to the public relations activities of the security agencies. Responses obtained showed respondents were positive towards the use of social media by the public relations unit of the security agencies.

Table 4.12: Importance of social media to security agency PR

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	63	52.5
No	19	15.8
Somehow	38	31.7
Total	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2021

According to Table 4.15 a good majority of 63 (52.5%) of the respondents were of the opinion that social media was important to the public relations activities of the government security agencies. They explained that the use of social media provides for quick access to the general public and a much wider audience which is critical to their work.

Opposing this view was a menial number of 19 (15.8%) affirming that social media platform was not important to the works of the security agencies. The respondents argued that social media or not, the security agencies ought to keep in constant touch with the general public. Finally, a slightly larger number of 38 (31.7%) considered social media to be somehow important to the public relations activities of the government security agencies cautioning against overuse of such platforms.

4.14 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

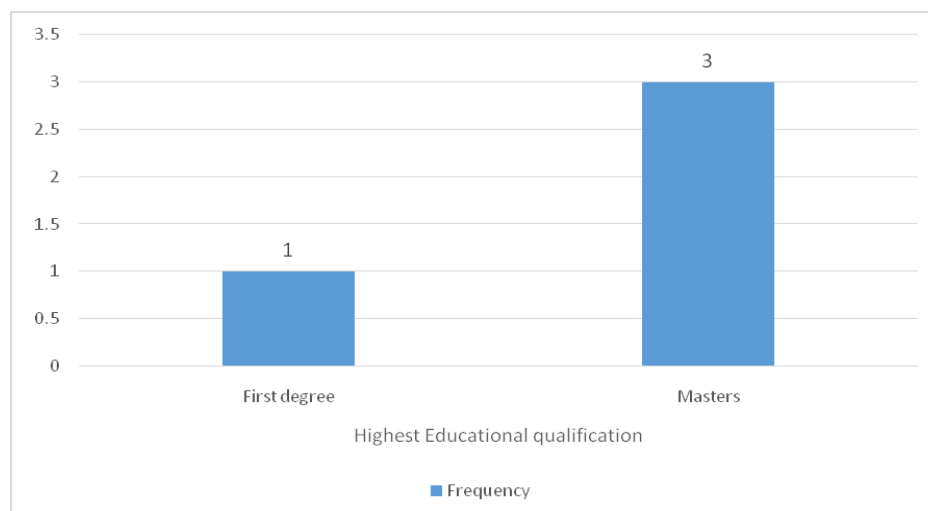
4.14.1 Biographic Data of Respondents

In this study, five (5) respondents were sampled and interviewed to understand the interplays between social media and public relations of the security services in Ghana. The study used purposive sampling to identify the respondents, who were able to make the time to participate in the interviews to gather qualitative data for the study.

Results from analysis of biographic data of respondents show that all respondents were male. All respondents, except one, indicated that they had obtained post-graduate degrees from tertiary institutions and had worked in their respective institutions for more than 10 years. All the respondents were also older than 45 years except one person who indicated that they were aged between 36 and 45 years.

Furthermore, all respondents indicated that they had been in their line of work for more than 10 years. These results suggest that respondents were adults, educated or trained properly and experienced in their line of work. This would make them prime candidates who could answer the research questions of the study.

Fig 4.3: Educational level of Respondents



Source: Field Survey, 2021

4.15 Social Media Platforms Used by Public Relations of Security Agencies

The study conducted in-depth interviews with participants in order to gauge their knowledge on the social media platforms used by their public relations outfits in their respective organizations. In this section, the results obtained from the interview on this subtopic are discussed.

From the results obtained, almost all the respondents confirmed that the public relations office of their institutions used social media platforms for communication. However, the extent of use in each organization was different. In some organizations, respondents report that social media had been used extensively to engage stakeholders while in others, social media was only used as a second option to gather information about the organization's perception and some of the negative attitudes of its staff.

What is clear from the respondents interviewed is that security agencies like the Ghana Fire Service, Ghana Prison Service, Ghana Immigration Service and the Ghana Armed Force employ social media in their public relations practices. The respondents indicated that social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram and Youtube are common platforms that the public relations units of these organizations adopt.

Some of the respondents are quoted as saying:

“...From what I just saw, I saw Instagram, Facebook and then Twitter. This is because is what is consistent with the changing trends. People are switching from the traditional way of accessing information in this technological way of accessing information. They want to save time. Almost everyone has a phone and if the phone is connected to the internet, then one can access any information in the world. It makes

it easier than the traditional one...”

“...Yes I would say that it has not developed much in the service but we still use it. We use the WhatsApp and then Facebook. We have not used much of the others. Notwithstanding, we have a website where we put out information for people to do enquiries and all that...”

“...Like I said, basically it is the Facebook and the WhatsApp. The others we have not been able to use it. The unit does not have the skill to manage others as we do not have anyone in the office who can do that...”

“...Apart from our website, we have Twitter, we have Facebook. That is what we are using for now. But we have intention to go to YouTube and Instagram, maybe by the close of the year. We look at the following and the cross-boundary references so that when you put information there, it goes faster. The accessibility and timeliness and the different categories of stakeholder profile are reasons why we used certain social media...”

The results are generally in line with previous studies that have shown that organizations are increasingly utilizing social media. Although many public relations professionals are already using social media in their online strategies, more research is needed to determine which channels are most effective for the industry rather than simply looking at how popular it is among its followers currently (McCorkindale, 2010). To keep up with the rapid evolution of online communications platforms, some organizations may seek out multiple technologies for disseminating information, while others may try to isolate themselves from the competition by separating themselves from it.

4.16 Determinants of social media tools employed by the security agencies.

Respondents were further asked about the factors that determine the preference of social media tools employed in public relations practice by the security agencies. All respondents indicated the speed and ease with which social media work is a key determinant for the adoption by public relations unit of the security agencies.

Respondents really emphasized on the timely and instant nature of social media tools as a determinant for its adoption in public relations practice in security seervice. Respondents indicated that as a result of the speed and ease of use of social media, their organizations could reach all their stakeholders effectively and in a cost-effective way.

Some respondents can be quoted as follows:

“... As I have already indicated our preference for facebook and whasap in particular is because it is the fastest means of reaching the general public, also it is instantaneous in terms of feedback or even sending the message. Right in the comfort of your home, even in the bathroom and still get the information as long as it is a smart phone. You can reach out to a larger audience and it is cost effective...”

“...For social media networking, we use Facebook. For microblogging, we have twitter. For photo sharing, we deploy Instagram. Video sharing, we deploy Facebook live and YouTube. But amongst all these, Facebook is the most effective. We have identified them to be platforms that we can use quickly and that can also help is disseminating information quickly to our publics....”

“...Basically, it is cost and then the speed. These days I do not send press releases to one media house after the other. I only sit down, put something on WhatsApp and Itext the various telephone numbers and then it goes. And there is instant feedback and it is very effective...”

“...Speed and reliability. Once your handle is credible, then it means it is reliable...”

Indeed, the convenience and speed at which information can be disseminated on social media are at the heart of its benefits to users. Therefore, for organizations, such benefits are expected, especially in relation to the cost of use and management of such tools. One respondent explained further that such social media tools were relevant in the current period of digitization and the information age. As a result, the use of social media tools by organizations was necessary to keep up the dynamism of the times and appeal to the general public, which is the main stakeholder of security agencies selected in this study. This respondent is quoted as follows:

“...It does. These days that we are now shifting to the Information Technology (IT) age. And without IT, you cannot have social media. It also affords us the chance to reach out to the target audience...”

These responses suggest that security agencies employ social media tools based on its cost effectiveness and instantaneous response mechanisms. Without such tools, the organizations may have to rely on other traditional media outlets which are not cost-friendly and require some lead time to process information.

In addition, these findings are in line with previous research on the value of social media for businesses. Research conducted by DiStaso, McCorkindale & Wright (2011) found the use of

social media was influenced by how and why society consumed information. This in turn affected how and why their participants used social media at the workplace. To this end, they explain that information must be relayed to stakeholders in the organization based on where they are located if proper communication is to be ensured.

According to Lee & Low (2013), social media (specifically Facebook) has been accepted as a formal communication channel by PR agencies due to its popularity, perceived ease of use, and as an advantage for them to do free publicity where information can be published at low cost and serves as an additional platform to connect their external audience. However, they acknowledged that using social media has its own set of advantages and disadvantages. This just goes to show that when used properly, social media can be a valuable communication tool for public relations professionals.

According to Motion et al. (2015), social media allowed organizations to connect and converse with their audiences. As a result of social media's "interactive, participatory characteristics," the public become active participants in social media communication rather than passive recipients of predetermined communication dominated by the organization. As a direct communication channel and tool for building these relationships with the organization's publics, Sutherland (2016) lauded social media as an alternative to traditional media. Organizations viewed the use of two-way symmetrical principles in leading social media conversations as beneficial.

Consider now the discussion about how the use of social media has enhanced the achievement of public relations objectives with regards to public relations of the security agencies in the country.

4.17 Social media and achievement of public relations objectives

Respondents indicated that the objectives of public relations units of security agencies have been achieved in part thanks to social media. However, respondents indicated that the enhancements of the achievements are not all positive. The positive enhancements resulting from the use of social media tools include increased speed of dissemination of information from national to sub-national levels and rapid feedback mechanism. One respondent particularly lauded social media because it had helped the public relations office of his organization to spread information quickly from the headquarters to regional level and even the grassroots level. The respondent is quoted as saying:

“...It has helped a lot. Formerly, we were not using Facebook; we were not using WhatsApp as it is. Information in the security services – we have what we call classified information and not classified. And sometimes even the ones that are not classified, when it gets to the regional level, it is very difficult for the regional commanders to let those at the grassroots get information. But because of Facebook and WhatsApp, people at the grassroots even see the information before the regional commanders are able to see the information sometimes...”

Another respondent also mentions that through the rapid nature of information flow through social media, the image of their organization has been preserved. This is particularly the case because, according to the respondent, social media tools helped them disseminate information to their stakeholders at the onset of the pandemic through Facebook and other social media platforms. The respondent can be quoted as follows:

“...I would say a lot...very much. Because as I mentioned earlier, because of the speed of social media, we have been able to reach a larger section of our publics than when we were dealing only with the traditional media. That has also generated some

public appreciation and support for our services and also support in terms of cash and kind. Through social media, we have been able to project the image of the Ghana Prisons service ...”

Furthermore, the last respondent indicated that generally social media tools had enhanced their objectives by helping them to reach a large audience. This response echoes the benefits of social media tools that have been adopted in these organizations and emphasizes on the ability of such tools to complement the work of public relations outfits in the security agencies. This respondent is quoted as follows:

“...It has afforded us the ability to reach out to a wider audience or range of people...”

Nonetheless, one respondent indicated that there are negative ways in which social media tools can slow down the achievement of the objectives of the public relations unit in security agencies like the Ghana Immigration service. According to the respondent, sometimes fraudsters are able to clone their logos and paraphernalia and use them to convince unsuspecting people about the organization’s activities. In the process, such innocent people pay huge sums of money for recruitment or other services of the Immigration service. According to the respondent, social media tools is a double-edged sword which can thwart the objectives of the public relations unit because of the activities of online scammers. The respondent can be quoted as follows:

“...It has greatly helped. Here too it is the two sides – positive and negative. Positive because it helps us to reach our stakeholders by way of providing information and getting feedback and knowing whether we are on the right track or not. And negatively too at times, for example with our recruitments, you know fraudsters and scammers are able to clone our logos etc, when it gets to social media, they get large

number of people to buy into their fake schemes. Although it is helping us, others are using it to thwart our efforts. So, it is a double-edged sword...”

With both ways in which the achievement of the objectives of the public relations office of security agencies outlined, respondents’ feedback on the impact of social media on public relations of security agencies is now discussed.

In spite of this, the findings are consistent with previous research into the impact of social media on organizations. As an example, Oneya (2010) discovers that public relations practitioners interviewed have acknowledged that social media has had a significant impact or influence over communication, particularly in the way their organizations handle external communication. According to him, a free forum for the exchange of ideas, information, and opinions can be found on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. To support Oneya's claim, Wright and Hinson (2009) point out that blogs and social media have had a significant impact on public relations, promoting instant feedback. Because of social media's immediacy and availability of platforms for public discourse on a variety of topics, traditional media can now reach a younger audience they otherwise would not have been able to reach.

The increasing use of social media by public relations managers has also changed the traditional methods of information dissemination in universities, as discovered by Inya (2017). On the other hand, Elsevier (2016) found that using social media as a communication platform during an organization's crime management can build trust and good relationships among its stakeholders and has a significant impact. He emphasized that using social media during a crisis is beneficial not only to the affected publics, but also to the organization.

In the words of Kietzmann et al. (2011), "reputation, sales, and even survival" of organizations can be significantly impacted by social media. Transparency and authenticity

within a company can be improved by actively engaging the public online through the use of social media like social networking sites like Facebook or microblogging services like Twitter (Men & Tsai, 2014). As a result of honest responses to public questions on social media, the organization's reputation is enhanced, while long-term relationships with its constituents are built. Consequently, the use of social media can aid organizations in establishing and maintaining a positive public image and fostering stronger ties with their constituents (Briones et al., 2011; Edosomwan et al., 2011).

4.18 Impact of social media public relations practitioners with security agencies

Respondents were further asked about the impact that social media has had on how public relations practitioners with the security agencies in the country communicate with the public. Respondents identified both positive and negative ways in which social media has impacted on how public relations practitioners in the security agencies engage the public. Notable among the positive ways include the increased opportunity for engagement with a wider stakeholder group or audience and the rapid feedback loop from the public relations practitioner and the final consumers.

Respondents from the Immigration Service was especially vocal on how social media allowed them to put out red alerts or notices to guide the public away from fraudulent schemes and tricks used by pranksters. The respondent also indicated that through such convenient tools, red alerts and notices shared are able to cross international borders and reach those concerned in other countries. Some of the respondents can be quoted as follows:

“...It has afforded us a wider audience. because these days the trend is changing. People are logging on to social media platforms because they have access to their

phones. So, it provides us a higher chance of getting our target audience...”

“...Positively too, if we have an emergency alert or public alert, social media has become a tool that helps us in that direction. Especially about recruitment fraud or travelling schemes, when you put it on social media you are sure that within the next second it can cross international boundaries...”

“...I will say that it has helped a great deal. Unlike first when you have to go to a radio station and talk. Now I can sit in my office and just put something up there and the whole Ghana or world will know about it. Sometimes people call me from Japan and other places because of our posts on social media. It makes us universal and it is also cheaper...”

One respondent also indicated that through social media, communication with the public from their public relations unit has been swift and beneficial to the organization. This is because the organization – the Ghana Prisons Service – manages the lives of inmates and there is generally a lot of congestion in the prisons, a situation that is ideal for the spread of diseases and infections. Therefore, the respondent indicated that through the use of social media tools, the organization benefitted from several donations during the pandemic that helped in keeping the inmates and officials safe. This respondent can be quoted as follows:

“...Positive especially within the wake of COVID-19. During COVID we had to use social media to reach many of the publics, that came to our aid to support the government in the provision of some PPEs[Personal Protective Equipments] because we knew that because of the way our places are congested, if we should record any

cases, it was going to be difficult to control and therefore there was a need for us to prevent, prevent, prevent. And to be able to prevent, through social media we were able to reach many of our benefactors who came to our aid...”

Secondly, respondents indicated that through social media, the public relations practitioners in security agencies have engaged the public in negative instances. The negative instances do not outweigh the benefits that the organizations have enjoyed as a result of the social media tools. Instead, the negative instances relate to the way in which social media has been a source through which the general public has gotten negative perceptions about the security organizations. This is usually because of disgruntled employees or some untrue story that makes its way into the public domain, riding on the speed of information flow on social media. Such situations usually made it difficult for the organizations because the negative public perception created by such news is formed very quickly. Although the public relations practitioners do their best to address such issues, the speed of information flow on social media works against them in such instances. Some respondents can be quoted as follows:

“...On the negative side, sometimes some aggrieved officers and some disgruntled inmates will quickly go to social media and put things that are not for public consumption in public domain. And as a public relations unit, sometimes we are called upon to react to some of those things. Sometimes it is a bit challenging. So that is the negative impact of social media on our work...”

“...Because when you put news on social media, because it is instantaneous, you get a lot of people getting it. So, before you can catch up and redeem yourself, the news would have gotten to every corner of the country. And at times, reacting or trying to straighten the news becomes difficult...”

In the midst of such positive and negative impacts, respondents were further asked about strategies that could be adopted by their agencies to improve the public relations practice. Nonetheless the findings in this section are generally aligned with results from earlier studies that suggest that social media improves the understanding of the stakeholder profiles of public relations practitioners.

Whole dynamics of marketing have been changed, and rather than investing in mass channels ads, companies are becoming more consumer-centered through interactions made over social media. They are able to understand the needs of the market from the market itself, greatly altering the way marketing has been done in the past. Bell and Emory (2011) conclude that social media can create more customized advertisements and promotion. This is much more practical for the user and less time consuming. Also, the actuality of content is an important factor for the social media, because of the always updated web customers never gets overage data. In addition, the internationality is a crucial factor; the companies have the possibility to advertise in different countries but can still focus on their domestic market.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) say that social media has reduced the control that organizations have over their messages. According to the authors, public relations practitioners were able to better control the organization's message through press releases before social media became commonplace. The rise of social media has made it possible for conversations to take place outside of an organization's control. There were many public relations professionals who thought social media would prevent them from controlling the organization's message, as Grunig (2009) noted.

4.19 Strategies to Enhance PR Practices

Respondents suggested a number of strategies to be adopted by security agencies in order to enhance their public relations practices. Respondents mostly cited the need for more budgetary allocation for the public relations units in order to allow them to improve on their deployment of public relations objectives and activities, some of which may be through social media. Respondents also spoke about the provision of logistics to aid the public relations unit. More logistics such as computers, data-enabled modems and smart devices can go a long way to increase the responsiveness of the public relations unit.

Also, respondents spoke about increasing the leverage or management privileges that are given to public relations practitioners. Respondents indicated that this would give more opportunity to practitioners to be responsive and engage better on social media so that the delays in responses from security agencies, especially in times of bad press online and in traditional media, can be curtailed. Some of the respondents can be quoted as follows:

“...One: resource mobilization, especially logistics. That like I said, society has become dynamic Public Relations should be equipped with all the logistics that we need to be able to monitor and reach out to our stakeholders.

In funding, PR is very costly. Funding to be able to come out with collaterals and other television programmes, documentaries to sell ourselves. So, we are handicapped by budget or financial constraints. If we are well resourced financially, we will be able to go out there. But because people do not see the immediate returns on the investments in PR, they think it is a waste of resources to put more money into PR. But if you look at the long-term return on investment or revenue on PR, you

realize that you have gotten a positive image out there. So, we need financial resources.

Then also, we need professional people – skilled, trained in that field. Not just taking anybody into the department. So, if we get the right caliber – those who were trained by communication institutions or journalism schools – to come unto the field and join, then we are building a very strong PR unit and also getting them into all the regions and some key command like enforcement or band unit or other units that are there so that when something happens it doesn't take days before it comes to headquarters before it is published.

Finally, the kind of leverage that we should give to the practitioners. For example, I have a practitioner in the central region but he is not allowed to engage with the media because he is junior officer. But he is a key person so you allow him to work or you give him the rank to work...”

“...A lot has to be done. As it is now, public relations is supposed to be a management function but in the scheme of things now, it is not being considered as such now. Going forward that is one area that we have to look at now. Probably, if the PR unit is developed into a directorate where one of the top men who sits in the top management unit happens to head the unit, then we are able to get firsthand information on the thinking of management on a wide range of issues. As it is now, I am the head of the PR unit and I report to a director, who would have to sit in management meetings. So, if he or she does not get the information to me on time, it creates a little bit of a gap. Secondly, I think that it will also be useful if budgetary

allocation is made for the PR unit as a unit. As it is now, it is not. We have to depend on the pool and so anytime that you need to do something that involve money, you'll have to put in memos and get approval before you can. Sometimes, certain things need to be done in good time and so it becomes a little bit of a challenge really. If we have a budget of our own and can access some imprest, it will go a long way to improve our work..."

Another respondent echoed similar sentiments by indicating that agencies can improve their public relations practices through partnerships with public relations firms in the private sector. Such partnerships would give further opportunity to staff to learn more from the private-sector-public-relations experts. The respondent can be quoted as follows:

"...A lot of the security services do not open up to private partnership. I believe when we open up to private partnership, it will go a long way to boost our PR in the various security services. I am saying this because you observe that when private partnership comes in, they are also able to do certain...play certain roles...like for instance, you and the police – have you watched that program? You realize that it is a partnership between the police and a private organization. It is a way of enhancing their educational drive. It is not all the time that you have to go to radio station. Sometimes we must also be on our own and do certain things that will be able to change the public attitude....so when we open up to private partnership, I believe it will go a long way..."

Finally, one respondent indicted that the Armed Forces is intending to take charge of its media and information dissemination needs by establishing its own set of media houses. In

this way, the organization can control information in the way that it wants and publish information on its own terms. The respondent also indicated that other strategies like the open day have been instituted in order for the public to see and understand the army as an organization and engage better with the organization. In addition, the respondent indicated that the Armed Forces will also deploy information through its website and partner sites in order to increase its visibility to the public. In so doing, the organization may employ social media to disseminate news of its plans once they come to fruition. The respondent can be quoted as follows:

“...Ghana Armed Forces is thinking of establishing a radio and a television station as a strategy to reach out to the public. Because we rely on the civil media, we are thinking of establishing our own media stations whereby we will do everything on our own or we will do along the civil one. The reason that caused us to subscribe to these social media platforms will cause us to subscribe to other platforms in order to increase our visibility.

The Open Day is also strategy that we have adopted to enhance our PR practice in the Ghana Armed Forces. We also allow lectures to be delivered to schools, organizations, and others, based on permission from higher authority.

The use of website in publishing stories from all garrisons. Other partner websites like the Ghana peace journal are being used to enhance the PR practices of the Armed Forces.....”

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study is to examine the role of social media in public relations practice from the perspective of the five (5) main security agencies of Ghana. A Mixed method was employed to aid in achieving this research objective. Whilst questionnaire was used to sample the views of 120 respondents within the Greater Accra Region, an interview guide was used to solicit the views of public relations officers of the 5 selected security agencies. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the key findings of the study and draw conclusion for the study. The chapter also proffers recommendation to enhance the use of social media by the public relations unit of the security agencies.

5.1 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

5.1.1 Objective One: Social media platforms used by PR units of security agencies

According to nearly all of the respondents, public relations offices at their institutions were using social media platforms to communicate. However, the extent of use in each organization varied. In some organizations, social media was used extensively to engage stakeholders, while to others social media was only as a second option to gather information about the organization's perception and some of the negative attitudes of its staff.

Further results showed that a number of security agencies in Ghana use social media in their public relations efforts. The public relations departments of these organizations use social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, according to the respondents.

5.1.2 Objective Two: Factors that determine social media tools employed in PR practice

Social media's speed and ease of use were cited by all respondents as a major factor in the adoption of public relations by security agencies.

Respondents emphasized the speed and immediacy of social media tools as a factor in the adoption of public relations in security services. In fact, most respondents said their organizations could easily reach all of their stakeholders because of the speed and simplicity of social media.

5.1.3 Objective Three: How the use of social media has enhanced achievement of PR objectives:

Respondents said that security agency public relations units have achieved some of their goals through social media. Some respondents, however, said that the enhancements to their achievements were not all positive. The use of social media tools has resulted in faster dissemination of information at the national and subnational levels, as well as a quick feedback mechanism. Another respondent mentions that their organization's image has been preserved because of the rapid flow of information through social media.

However, a single respondent noted that social media can have a negative impact on the public relations efforts of security agencies, such as the Ghana Immigration service. In some cases, fraudsters are able to replicate the organization's logo and paraphernalia and use them to deceive unsuspecting members of the public.

5.1.4 Objective Four: public perceptions of the use of social media by the PR unit of the security agencies

Public safety tips and recruitment notices are frequently shared by security agencies' public relations departments on social media. In addition, respondents said that the security agency's PR unit used social media to post information or tips on domestic violence. Respondents also said that the information provided was useful because it helped to improve the public's understanding of security issues and the public's perception of security agencies in the country.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Both the literature and findings has evidenced that social media has indeed had an impact on public relations practices irrespective of the organisation and has further changed the way that public relations unit communicate, be it security agencies like government security or public. Whilst it is evidenced from the interview that social media is inculcated in communicating with the public there is the need to exercise caution to ensure that messages on social media reflects the position of the security agencies.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings the following recommendations for the study have been made:

- This study has shown that social media has significantly increased in importance for public relations practice. However, it identified several themes that suggest there are gaps in knowledge about the use of social media across current public relations practice. A still prevalent focus on the one-way dissemination of information, for instance, might lead to the conclusion that public relations practitioners still lack sufficient social media skills to apply social media in a conversational manner. This

reinforces Macnamara et al.'s (2018) advice that trainee education should focus on two-way communication to inform, influence and enhance the practice.

- The internet and social media in particular has fraudsters which uses information to defraud innocent victims. The public relations unit of the security agencies should have a team which constantly monitors social media to ensure that such acts are curtailed and if possible the perpetrators arrested. Further, the unit should be quick to respond to such releases to ensure that people do not fall victim to such publications.
- The public relations unit should not use social media solely as a means of communicating with the public. The use of social media should only complement traditional media such as the televisions, radio and newspapers.
- The units should have dedicated numbers where the needs and queries of the public would be responded to on 24 hour basis.
- Regular survey by the public relations unit to appreciate the expectation and perception of the public would go a long way in designing messages intended for public consumption on social media platforms.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Research Questionnaire

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

These questionnaires are intended to collect data that will help the researcher to the purpose of the study is to examine the influence of social media on public relations practice with special emphasis on the five (5) main security agencies of Ghana. Whatever information you give will be kept confidential. Please, complete this questionnaire with appropriate answers with brief reasons or tick where necessary.

PLEASE TICK (✓) OR WRITE WHERE APPROPRIATE

1. Gender of Respondents

- a. Male []
- b. Female []

2. Age of Respondents

- a. 18 - 25years []
- b. 26-35years []
- c. 36-45years []
- d. 45 years and above []

3. What is the highest educational level you have attained?

- a. Basic Education/incomplete/O' Level []
- b. A' Level/SSS/Senior High School []
- c. Diploma/ First/ Second Degree []
- d. Professional []
- e. Others (specify)_____ []

4. Please do you have access to or use any social media platform

- a. Yes []
- b. No []

5. Which social platform(s) do you have access to or use? (Kindly tick as many as applicable)

- a. Instagram []
- b. Snapchat []
- c. Facebook []
- d. WhatsApp []
- e. Telegram []
- f. Facetime []
- g. Tiktok []
- h. Reddit []
- i. Pinterest []
- j. Twitter []
- k. LinkedIn []

6. Which of the following government security agents are you aware off? (Tick as many as applicable)

- a. Ghana Police Service (GPS) []
- b. Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) []
- c. Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) []
- d. Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) []
- e. Customs Excise and Preventive Service (CEPS) []

7. How regular do you access the previously mentioned platforms?

- a. Very regular []
- b. Regula []
- c. Not regular []
- d. Not very regular []

8. To what extent do you trust information from social media platforms?

- a. A great extent []
- b. An extent []
- c. Not to an extent []
- d. Not to a great extent []

9. Do you think it is prudent for the security agencies in Ghana to use social media as a means of public relations?

- a. Yes []
- b. No []
- c. Somehow []

Please explain your response: _____

10. When was the last time you saw a communiqué from any of the security agents on social media?

- a. Within the last 3 months []
- b. From 3 to 6 months ago []
- c. From 6 to 9 months ago []
- d. From 9 to 12 months ago []
- e. Above 1 year []
- f. None []

11. What was the communicate by the government security agents?

- a. About financial management []
- b. About domestic violence []
- c. About health risks []
- d. About national security threats []
- e. Others []
- f. Not applicable []

12. Was the information relevant and able to help you make an informed decision?

- a. Yes []
- b. No []
- c. Somehow []
- d. Not applicable []

Please explain your response: _____

13. Which social media platforms do you usually see information from government security agencies?

- a. Instagram []
- b. Snapchat []
- c. Facebook []
- d. WhatsApp []
- e. Telegram []
- f. Facetime []
- g. Tiktok []
- h. Twitter []
- i. LinkedIn []

14. Do you trust information from the platforms used by the government security agents as a means of public relations?

- a. Yes []
- b. No []
- c. Somehow []

18. Do you think usage of social media platforms by government security agencies is ideal?

- a. Yes []

b. No []

c. Somehow []

Please explain your response: _____

19. Do you think it helps to enhance the image of the security agents if they use social media platforms?

a. Yes []

b. No []

c. Somehow []

Please explain your response: _____

20. Do you think social media is important to the public relations activities of the government security agencies?

a. Yes []

b. No []

c. Somehow []

Please explain your response: _____

Appendix B: Interview Guide

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INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT

This interview is to enable the researcher, carry out an investigation on influence of social media on public relations practice with special emphasis on the five (5) main security agencies of Ghana. The information gathered is for academic purposes only and remain solely for this research.

Any information provided will be treated with the highest confidence. For the purposes of learning and proper representation of your views, I will crave your indulgence to have audio-record the interview. Pseudonyms will be used to represent you or your organisation should the need to use names arise. If you agree to participate in the interview, would kindly sign the space below for me?

I having been fully briefed on what the project is about hereby give my consent to be interviewed.

Date:

Name of interviewer

Signature

Date:

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

INTERVIEW GUIDE

These questionnaires are intended to collect data that will help the researcher to the purpose of the study is to examine the influence of social media on public relations practice with special emphasis on the five (5) main security agencies of Ghana.

Whatever information you give will be kept confidential.

Please indicate your rank: _____

Please indicate your position: _____

How long have you held your current position? _____

1. Gender of Respondents

a. Male []

b. Female []

2. Age of Respondents

a. 18 - 25years []

b. 26-35years []

c. 36-45years []

d. 45 years and above []

3. What is the highest educational level you have attained?

a. Diploma/ First/ Second Degree []

b. Professional []

c. Others (specify)_____ []

4. How long have you been in the service?

a. Less than 3 years []

b. From 3 to 6 years []

c. From 6 to 9 years []

d. Above 10 years []

5. What is the main goal of the public relations unit of the agency?

6. To what extent would you consider the goal achieved?

7. What media do you use in communicating with the public and why?

8. How important is social media to works of the public relations unit of the agency?

9. What is the impact that social media has had on how public relations practitioners with the security agencies in the country communicate with the public?

10. What are the modes of social media platforms are used by public relations office and why?

11. What are the factors that determine the preference of social media tools employed in public relations practice by the security agencies?

12. How the use of social media is has enhanced the achievement of public relations objectives with regards to public relations?

13. What strategy(ies) do you think can be adopted by the agency to enhance it public relations practice?
