

IMPLICATIONS & IMPACT OF DIGITIZATION IN THE INDIAN PR INDUSTRY: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SOCIAL MEDIA

Shweta Vaid

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Sharda University (Sharda School of Media Film and Entertainment), Greater Noida, 2020400327.shweta@dr.sharda.ac.in and Shwetavaid100@gmail.com

Dr. Divya

Assistant Professor, Sharda University (Sharda School of Media Film and Entertainment), Greater Noida

Abstract

As the number of social media people throughout the globe has grown, some public relations strategies have begun integrating social media into their strategies. Undoubtedly, this new form of communication is expanding rapidly; thus, it is vital to investigate “how social media and other new media have influenced the area of public relations as a whole and how organisations are implementing this new form of communication into their day-to-day operations.

The goal of this study is to have a better understanding of the impact of social media on public relations practitioners. In addition, the study will investigate the influence social media has had on how public relations professionals interact, as well as the numerous social media platforms and kinds that PR professionals utilize. The study will also examine how the usage of social media has helped to the attainment of PR objectives and the elements that affect people's selections for the most popular social media platforms”. It will also determine how many people public relations workers may contact through social media. Future scholars who want to work in this area will thus find this study's findings valuable. It benefits organizations and practitioners in the industry since it emphasizes the significance of social media to public relations area.

One hundred people were selected at random to complete a questionnaire that had been properly crafted and for the purpose of conducting a survey to gather information for this study. The results effectively confirmed the impact of social media platforms on the communication practices of public relations professionals. This is as a result of the fact that these platforms enable seamless interaction between people and media organizations. Additionally, social media usage has made it simpler to achieve objectives connected to public relations. Social media has an impact on public relations expertise, aids in the development of interpersonal ties, makes it easier for people to share information about the newest advancements in public relations tools and approaches, and shapes the attitude of those who practice public relations.

Keywords: *Public Relations, Indian PR Industry, Social Media, New Media, Instant Messaging.*

Introduction

One of the fields that are seeing the most rapid expansion all over the globe is social media, which has a user base that numbers in the billions worldwide. Although it has had some kind of influence on pretty much every industry under the sun, the public relations industry has been

hit particularly hard by it, which has resulted in both new possibilities and difficulties for brands. As a result of the fact that it enables real-time interaction between consumers and brands across a range of channels, there has been a rise in the expectation that brands would provide prompt and efficient responses to questions led by customers. Additionally, the growth of social media has resulted in a considerable increase in the number of digital influencers that companies may contact and work with.

Because of its rapid development and widespread use, digital technology has become indispensable to every industry. The use of social media for marketing purposes has developed from its original purpose as a networking tool. For organizations that want to become, well, smarter, adopting smart technology has become almost as much of a must as it is a tool.

The way that people consume news has evolved, and the rise of citizen journalism has been significantly influenced by social media. As a consequence, in order to survive in this new climate, PR specialists and reporters have had to adapt.

Statement of the Problem

This study's objective is to investigate "how public relations professionals use social media, as well as the benefits and repercussions that new media have had on the field of public relations, and the degree to which public relations professionals regard new forms of media as valuable communication channels with the general public".

Public Relations and Social Media

"The communications world is dramatically moving in a direction that is increasingly digital, and those who understand this transformation will communicate much more effectively than those who do not," according to Wright & Hinson's 2009 assessment on Larry Weber (2009). Since they are in the business of connecting with diverse audiences, public relations professionals must comprehend this transition in order to communicate successfully.

On the other side, the fast expansion of social media makes it difficult for industry professionals and students who educate future industry professionals to stay current. Because of their independence from conventional editors and media gatekeepers, blogs, for example, are becoming more popular (Pavlik, 2007). An increasing number of blogs are turning to blogs not only as a source of information but also as a way to improve their standing in the eyes of the general public via the act of blogging themselves. Public relations professionals used to be in charge of packaging material and distributing it to different media sources in the hopes that it would be published. In the modern world, practitioners are still in charge of packaging the material, nonetheless, people may now distribute their material freely via blogs, social networks, and other online media. For instance, if a customer tweets about a negative experience, the business is able to see these remarks and reply right away in order to give a more personalized level of care to its clients.

Paul Gillin (2008), researched that the expansion of social media has given birth to a new kind of communication characterized by community and conversation. To effectively employ these new communication channels as a method of communicating with the public and to be aware of any possible ramifications for the practice of public relations, it is essential to be aware of them. This information is required in order to comprehend the possible effects these new communication channels may have on the public relations industry. It is similarly crucial for journalism and public relations schools on college campuses to offer practitioners who will one day work in these sectors with appropriate curriculum in order to ensure that these strategies are properly used.

Social media platforms such as "Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook" represent the bulk of the new technology that PR professionals are currently adopting. Across all platforms, the number of people using social media is steadily rising. Although roughly 24 percent of practitioners utilized social networking sites few years ago, blogs and podcasts were the most prevalent means of communication for public relations professionals (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008). Currently, social media is a vital component of practically all public relations (PR) operations. According to the conclusions of a research done by Mogos (2011), the usage of social media makes a company look more approachable. The author claims that social media may give a company a face as people seek to communicate with one another. As a result, organizations are turning to social media to personalize their interactions with a variety of constituents. An important argument made by the author in this book is the idea of leveraging social organizations of social media in order to better connect with their target audience.

The potential influence of social networking sites on public relations is significant. A 1994 study by Yin found that employees' blogs had the potential—vast and endless potential—to promote discourse, aid in product marketing, and pave the path for two-way communication channels. Oneya's (2010) research on the influence of social media on public relations yielded consistent results. Additionally, he noted that social media involvement is prevalent despite difficulties such as a lousy internet connection, a lack of key skills, and a poor reputation for dependability.

How Social Media has Affected the Public Relations Industry

The public relations industry has experienced significant developments in new media and technology (social media) as well as new chances for engaging with consumers and businesses. For a number of causes, several advancements in communication and technology have brought about a significant amount of change in this area. However, it's probable that none of these factors are as influential as social media's growth and rising popularity.

The emergence of social media has disturbed traditional communication methods in their entirety. This covers the way in which organizations communicate, along with how often, where, and with whom they do it. Public relations professionals must change their techniques

to engage their audiences effectively. They use social media to engage and listen to their clientele.

Social media has dramatically changed public relations, and all professional communicators must utilize it.

A. *Wide Reach*

The instantaneous and chaotic nature of social media Twitter exchanges 6,000 tweets each second on average. As a result, social media is an excellent tool for disseminating breaking news reports; yet, this also means that a news story's useful life is much shorter than it formerly was. This means that public relations professionals need to keep current since journalists are always seeking for the newest and best things.

Social media platforms have the ability to disseminate a narrative further than ever before, even if a story's lifespan may be shorter than in the past. An article that was originally published in a relatively little local journal in the centre of the nation may, as a result of social sharing, become viral online, meaning that it will travel all over the world and become the next big story.

B. *Crisis communications has become even more important*

Today, public relations experts are responsible for preserving brand voice and protecting the company's online image. The "publication and promotion of additional content, community engagement, media monitoring and measurement, and scheduling interviews with the media and pitching stories" are the methods used to accomplish this.

You risk missing out on a potentially profitable opportunity if you don't keep an eye on social media for mentions of your brand and not having a strategy in place for handling customer feedback (both positive and negative).

C. *Increased access to journalists.*

Public relations professionals may connect with reporters by using social media. By following journalists on social media, public relations professionals may get insight into their tone of voice, viewpoints on relevant topics, and most current work.

But it doesn't mean you should neglect all of your other responsibilities and spend all day reading through Twitter. Instead, utilize social media monitoring tools to locate newspapers and journalists who suit your requirements, and then gain instantaneous access to their most recent tweets as well as their social media accounts.

D. *PR pros find themselves in the customer-service trenches.*

Social media conversations take place in real time. This means that users of social media platforms demand a rapid response from companies if they have a problem, complaint, or question.

Although obtaining media placements for a client or brand remains the majority of a PR specialist's primary task, they are now considerably more client-focused as a result.

Nowadays, creating a social media community for your brand is just as vital as having your CEO on the radio or television. Depending on your sector, it could even be more effective than gaining conventional media coverage.

E. *Social media has introduced a new PR phenomenon: influencers*

The term "influencer" refers to a new type of citizen journalist that has emerged as a result of social media. When it comes to bringing in new clients for a brand, influencers are often regarded as among the most effective marketing ways. These social media influencers with large followings might represent huge opportunities for public relations professionals and the brands they represent now more than ever.

F. *Makes PR affordable for small businesses*

In the past, politicians and huge corporations that had the cash to spend on brand management and crisis communications were the primary clients of public relations firms and the professionals who worked for such firms.

Even the smallest businesses may now afford to outsource their online presence maintenance to a college student majoring in communications, journalism, or public relations. This makes public relations more accessible to businesses that need it but cannot afford the assistance of public relations professionals with better training and skill.

G. *Integrated PR*

Before public relations professionals could incorporate social media into a successful PR strategy, marketing professionals were already using it. Thus, public relations professionals must mix marketing ideas and practices with PR strategy in order to properly implement social media marketing and get the required outcomes.

Because of this interconnectedness, a corporation that has separate PR and marketing teams may find itself at odds with one another about ownership of social media.

H. *Encouraged customer focus*

Because of social media, many brands were forced to start concentrating more on their clients and fostering great connections with them. Customers who have had negative encounters may always vent their frustrations on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook.

Because of this, companies are compelled to speedily resolve solutions to problems in order to prevent a public relations disaster. The exchanges that take place on social media are also used by companies in order to enhance their operations as a whole, particularly in the areas of customer service and praise.

I. Reachability, Flexibility, and Customizability are Key Features

Because of social media, brands now have no choice but to concentrate more of their attention on their customers and work to develop solid, good relationships with them. This gives the company the ability to make the buyer feel like a "king" or make the impression that the brand is more approachable. It is now feasible to track down interested users or prospective customers thanks to new advertising forms and content types. Additionally, you have the ability to tailor these ads for each viewer. You now have a platform where you may be more dynamic and versatile if you combine this feature with the ability to modify branding elements such as cover photos, etc., according to your requirements.

J. 24/7 Availability

Everything is accessible at all times, day or night, on social media. On the plus side, brands are able to publish news, updates, and any other information at any time since, regardless of what time it is, at least one person is listening and is prepared to respond. However, when negative news spreads rapidly across social media platforms, the 24-hour-a-day news cycle may become a curse.

K. Unique & Engaging Content

The need for original content is increasing, and original content continues to be more successful than ever before at capturing the attention of readers. Because almost everyone has access to social media and can quickly open an account on any social media platform in order to make a blog, everyone is looking for stories that may forge a connection with their audience. Therefore, it has become somewhat new to discover a novel time to each new story that one writes. When however, the professionals are able to do it perfect, then people all over the globe begin sharing their content.

L. Ability for Both interact and respond

In the past, communication was a one-way street, meaning that companies would disseminate content while customers had no public channel via which they could readily interact with or respond to the content that was being disseminated. Customers interact with brands and their content in modern times by enjoying, sharing, and commenting on the latter. This gives the brands a better idea of how efficiently their content and ads are reaching the general public, which enables them to adjust their future strategies appropriately. The conversations that take place on social media are also used by companies in order to enhance their operations as a whole, particularly in regards to business compliments and grievances.

Along with these privileges, one must also accept responsibility. Customers now have access to venues like Twitter and Facebook where they may discuss their negative experiences with

other customers. Because of this, companies are compelled to speedily resolve solutions to problems in order to prevent a public relations disaster. Naturally, providing assistance to a consumer or client through social media will result in more good comments and improved ratings and reviews on the website.

M. Bringing Together Various Services

As a result of the fact that social media consists of a great number of components and demands the efforts of the whole team, it is now compelling a great number of various PR companies to expand the reach of their organizations. In order to give a comprehensive service to their clients, public relations firms are including advertising professionals, digital marketing professionals, and data specialists into their teams.

Research Methodology

A survey research technique has been chosen as the research methodology for this work since it enables a wide number of people to be sampled with regard to the research issue. A questionnaire serves as the study's main instrument, which will be sent to the respondents and retrieved from them as soon as they have finished answering the questions included within it. There were a total of 100 people from the Delhi-National Capital Region of India that participated in this study. Because there are so few people in the population that is being researched, this study will use the total enumeration sampling technique. Despite the population being researched having such a small number of people, total enumeration sampling permits the use of the entire population. As a result, the full group of one hundred respondents served as the basis for the sample size for this work.

Taking into mind the immediacy of the study as well as the submission date, the questionnaire will be given to the respondents, completed by them, and then retrieved within fourteen days after its distribution.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

Table 1: Gender Distribution

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	47	47
	Female	53	53
	Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Inference: Male respondents make up 47% of the total, while female respondents make up 53%. Thus, it can be concluded that women make up the majority of the respondents.

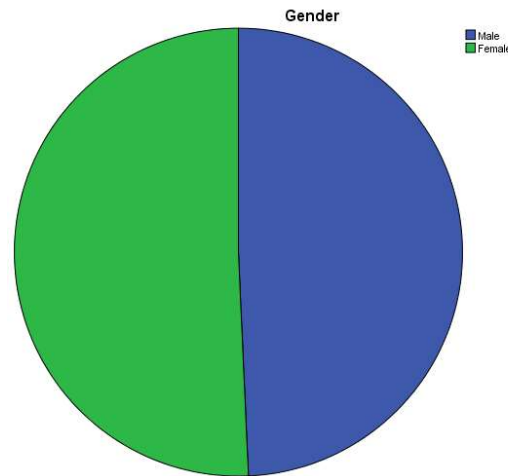


Figure 1: Gender Distribution

Table 2: Age

PARTICULARS		Frequency	Percent
AGE	Below 30 years	35	35
	31 to 40 years	25	25
	41 to 60	25	25
	Above 60 years old	15	15
	Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Inference: Majority of respondent i.e. 35percent belongs to below 30 years old.

Table 3: Marital Status

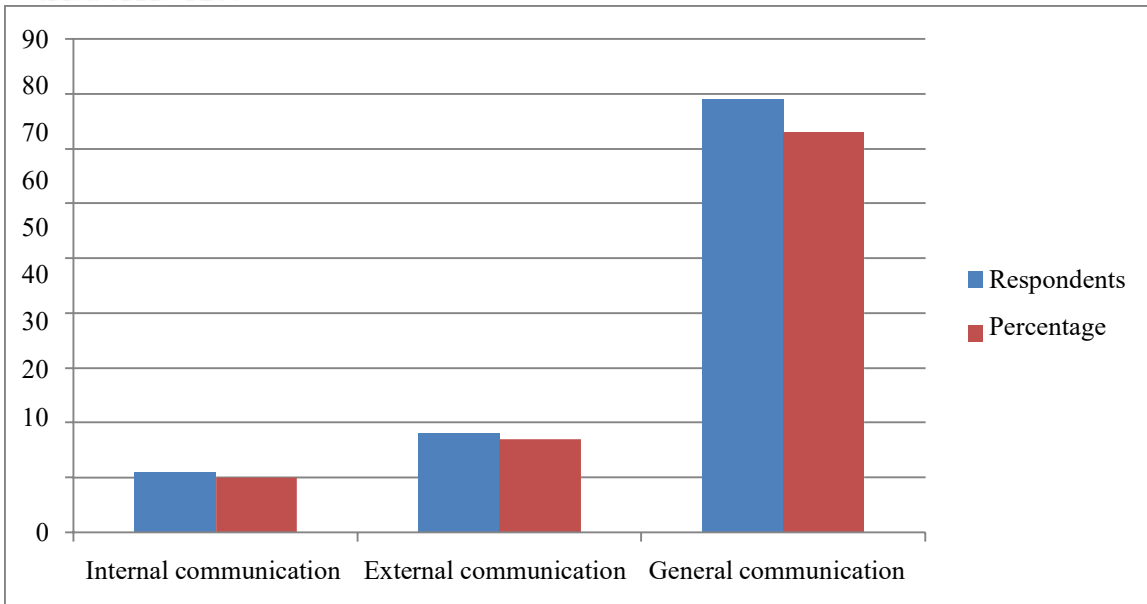
PARTICULARS		Frequency	Percent
MARITAL STATUS	Married	62	62
	Unmarried	38	38
	Total	100	100

Source: Primary Data

Inference: We can see from the above table that 62 percent of respondents are married, which is the majority.

Research Questioner 1

What kind of changes has been brought about in the way those public relations practitioners communicate as a result of the rise of social media?

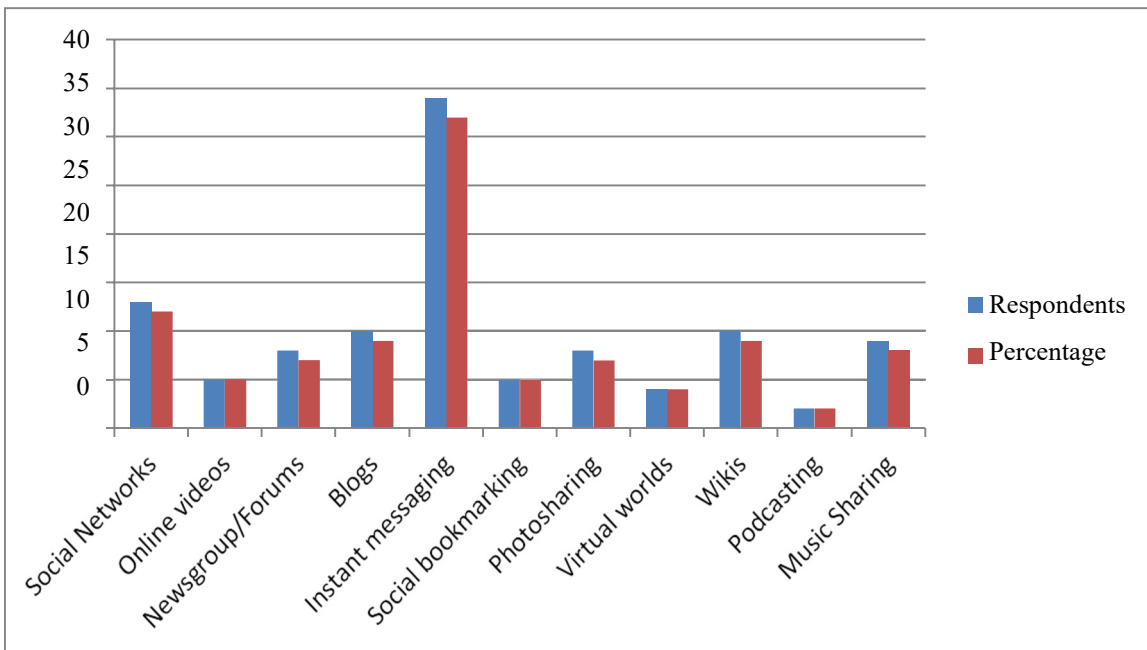


Interpretation

The majority of respondents said social media had improved PR professionals' and media organizations' communication. Social media enables people to contact media organizations, such as radio and TV stations, to participate in live broadcasts and ask questions about anything unclear.

Research Questioner 2

What kinds of social media platforms do public relations officers utilize, and how do they use them?



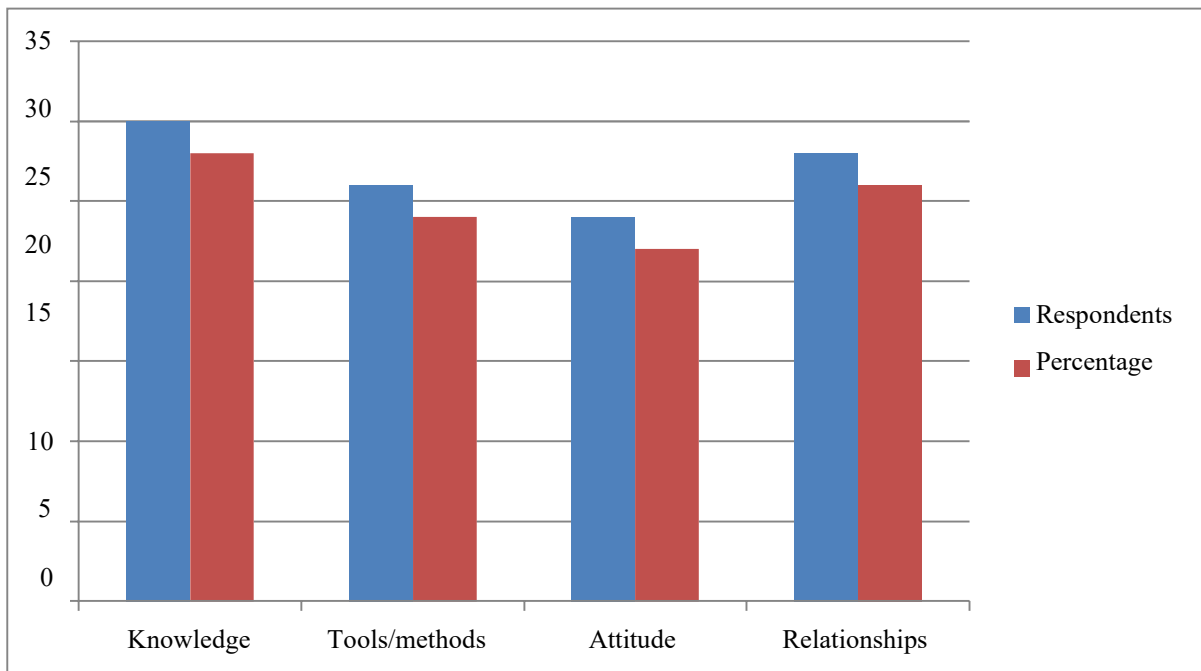
Interpretation



Public relations officers utilize a wide variety of social media platforms, including "social networks, online videos, newsgroups and forums, blogs, instant messaging, social bookmarking, photo-sharing, virtual worlds, wikis, podcasting, and music sharing". The majority of the respondents, it was discovered from their replies, continued to believe that instant messaging platforms, like "Facebook, Skype, Whatsapp, SnapChat", etc., were more widely used. This is understandable since nearly everyone in today's culture who has a mobile device can take benefit of instant messaging devices. The features that enable access to instant messaging and media hosting services are built into devices including mobile phones, tablets, laptop computers, and others. With the advent of internet access, a variety of programs such as Facebook, Skype, Whatsapp, SnapChat, and others give the means to engage in real-time text-based and video discussions.

Research Questioner 3

In what ways has the use of social media contributed to the successful completion of public relations goals?



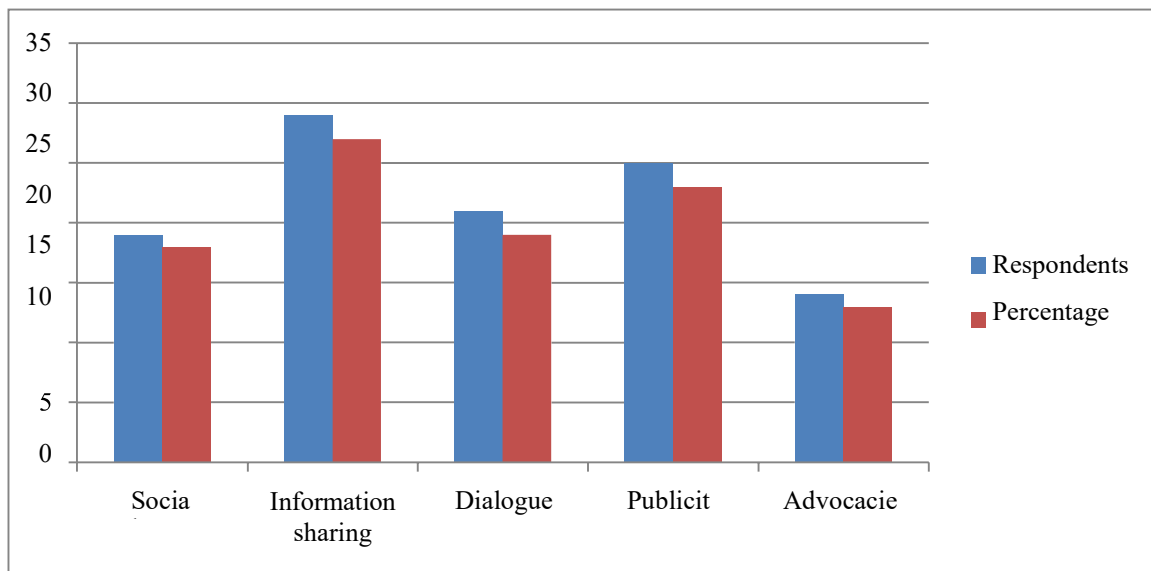
Interpretation

According to respondents, the employment of social media has increased the attainment of public relations objectives in the following ways: first, by having the biggest impact on public relations knowledge; second, by having an effect on connections with people; third, by having an effect on the tools and techniques related to public relations; and fourth, by having an effect on the attitude of individuals who participate in public relations activities. The introduction of social media as a result of technological advancements has been of easy assistance in the technology of learning about public relations; the widespread use of the internet has made it

much simpler for people to take advantage of the benefits offered by online encyclopedias, from which a variety of different types of information can be obtained, including information about public relations and the practices that are associated with it. Social media may be used to rapidly and readily learn about new developments in public relations tools and techniques that aren't yet widely known. It is simple and fast to get this information. In the past, it was difficult to engage with people remotely since people did not always have simple access to the internet. The only dependable and costly methods of communication were the telephone, fax, and telegraph, but these barriers have all been eliminated by the internet and social media.

Research Questioner 4

Which social media tools are preferred in the field of public relations practice? What variables determine this preference?



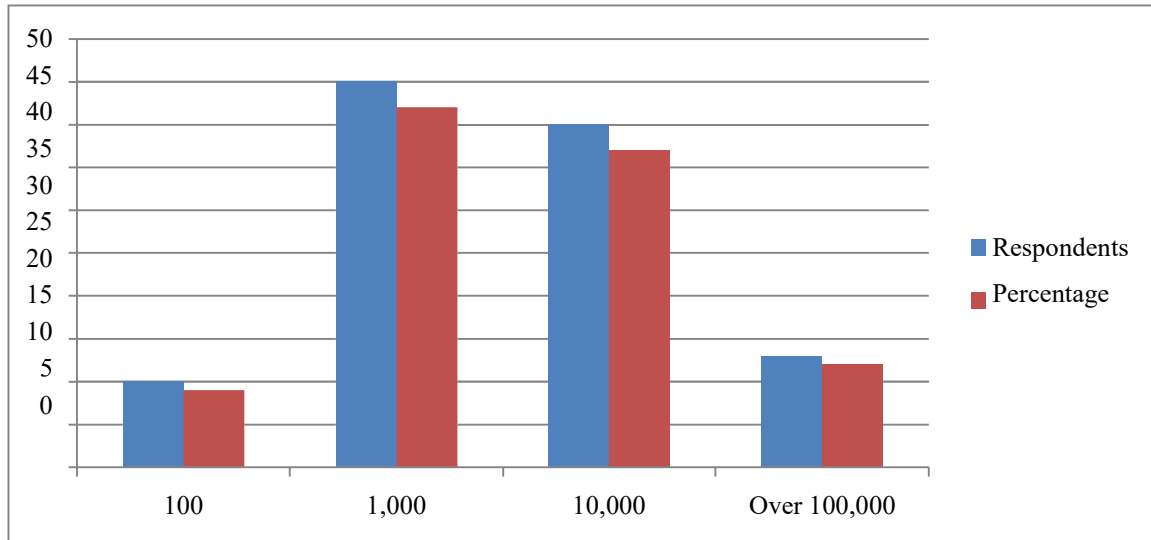
Interpretation

The replies of those who were asked the question, "Which social media tools are preferred in the field of public relations practice? What variables determine this preference?" are shown below. Indicated that information sharing was their top preference, followed by publicity, conversation, social events, and advocacy work as their least preferred advocacies. The majority of those who responded agreed with the work that their workplace's department uses social media to disseminate information on a variety of respondents, including services, policies, events, and others. The use of social media not only makes it possible to share information between different organizations and between people but also provides a means by which information may be sent from one department within an organization to another. In addition to the dissemination of information, it is also put to use for the purposes of publicity and advocacy, functions that are increasingly being used by internet marketers and other interested parties as a means of reaching the audiences they want to engage. Instant messaging is the most popular platform for dialogue on social media; this is due to the ability to conduct

instant conversations by providing the means for a live chat. Depending on the user's preferences, this might be a video chat or a text-based chat.

Research Questioner 5

Approximately how many people can be reached by public relations officers via the use of social media?



Interpretation

The study's results indicate that it is uncertain how many people social media usage might potentially reach. During the interviews, the majority of the respondents whose jobs included customer service and PRO said that they may get requests from approximately a thousand people each day asking for details about services, procedures, and criticisms. This shows that the volume of questions they get everyday via different digital channels, such emails, instant messages, Facebook, Instagram, etc., may sometimes even reach 1000, which may be how the respondents founded their estimate.

Conclusion

Public relations professionals' interactions with their clients have been greatly and significantly impacted by the usage of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, wikis, social bookmarking, instant messaging, and others. This is due to the fact that these platforms enable seamless interaction between people and media organizations. Additionally, social media usage has made it simpler to achieve objectives connected to public relations. Social media has an impact on public relations knowledge, facilitates the development of interpersonal ties, facilitates the interchange of information about the most recent people in public relations tools and tactics, and affects the mentality of those who practice public relations. A multitude of elements, including information sharing, publicity, conversation, social activities, and advocacy, impact the use of social media tools used in public relations practice.

According to the study's findings, social media has had a significant influence on the profession of public relations since it has altered how media organizations typically interact, whether internally or externally. Live conversations are a now feasible thanks to instant messaging, which makes it simple to get an answer to a question right away. Public relations professionals now have the chance to connect with their target audience online by using social media. They could only communicate in the past via unreliable and costly ways like the telephone, fax, and telegraph. In contrast, they could only do this in the past using these techniques. The Internet's ability to reach and engage a large number of people simultaneously has influenced how public relations practitioners learn, improved interpersonal relationships, served as a channel for learning about the latest advancements in tools and methods, and shaped the attitudes of those who engage in the practice.

The effect of social media will continue to grow, and professionals in every industry need to come to terms with the reality that this will continue to be the case. Because of this, brands and organizations that utilize social media as a platform for public relations (PR) need to think larger, do more, and continually hunt for stories that have the potential to become game-changers for their business and their clients.

References

1. Alhabash, S., & Ma, M. (2017). A tale of four platforms: Motivations and uses of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat among college students? *Social Media+ Society*, 3(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117691544>
2. Breakenridge, I. (2009). *PR 2.0: New media, new tools, new audiences*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
3. Briones, R. L., Kuch, B., Liu, B. F. & Jin, Y. (2011), "Keeping up with the Digital Age: How the American Red Cross uses Social Media to Build Relationships", *Public Relations Review*, 37(1): 37-43.
4. Clarke, V., Braun, V., Terry, G & Hayfield N. (2019). Thematic analysis. In P. Liamputtong. (Ed.), *Handbook of research methods in health and social sciences* (pp. 843-860). Springer.
5. Coombs, W. T. and Holladay, S. J. (2010), *PR Strategy and Application: Managing Influence*, United States: Wiley-Blackwell.
6. Dunbar, R. I., Arnaboldi, V., Conti, M. & Passarella, A. (2015), "The Structure of Online Social Networks Mirrors Those in the Offline World", *Social Networks*, 43(5): 39-47.
7. Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C. & Lampe, C. (2007), "The Benefits of Facebook "Friends": Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4): 1143-1168.
8. Emery L., Philip H. A. and Warren K. Agee (1991) *Introduction to Mass Communication*. 10th ed. Harper Collins Publishers. New York (p.56-57).

9. Eyrich, N., Padman, M. L., & Sweetser, K. D. (2008). PR practitioners' use of social media tools and communication technology. *Public Relations Review*, 34(4), 412-414.
10. Gillin, P. (2008). "New Media, New Influencers and Implications for the Public Relations Profession", Excerpted from *Journal of New Communications Research*, Vol. II/Issue 2, retrieved from <http://palliativecare.issuelab.org/resources>
11. Hennink, M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative research methods*. Sage Publications.
12. Jefkins, F. (1998). *Public Relations*. 5th Edition. Great Britain: Bell and Bain Ltd. p.6-7.
13. Jakus, D. (2018). Visual communication in public relations campaigns. *Marketing of Scientific and Research Organizations*, 27(1), 25-36. <http://doi.org/10.14611/minib.27.03.2018.07>
14. Kaplan, A. M. and Haenlein, M. (2010), "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media", *Business Horizons*, 53(1): 59-68.
15. Mogos, S. (2011). The impact of social media on business performance. *Canadian journal of business and marketing*, 23(8), 127 – 145.
16. Oneya, F. P. (2010). *The impact of social media on public relations practice*, MA Thesis. University of Nairobi.
17. Pavlik, J. (2007). *Mapping the consequences of technology on public relations*. Retrieved from www.instituteforpr.org.
18. Safko, L. (2020). *The social media bible: Tactics, tools, and strategies for business success*. John Wiley & Sons.
19. Weber, L. (2007). *Marketing to the Social Web: How Digital Customer Communities Built Your Business*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
20. Weber, L. (2009). *Marketing to the Social Web*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.
21. Wright, D., & Hinson, M. (2009). An analysis of the increasing impact of social and other new media on public relations practice. A paper presented to 12th annual International Public Relations Research Conference.
22. Wright, D., & Hinson, M. (2009). An updated look at the impact of social media on public relations practice. *Public Relations Journal*, III(2).
23. Wright, D., & Hinson, M. (2009). Examining how public relations practitioners actually are using social media. *Public Relations Journal*, III(3).
24. Yin, R.K. (1994): *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.