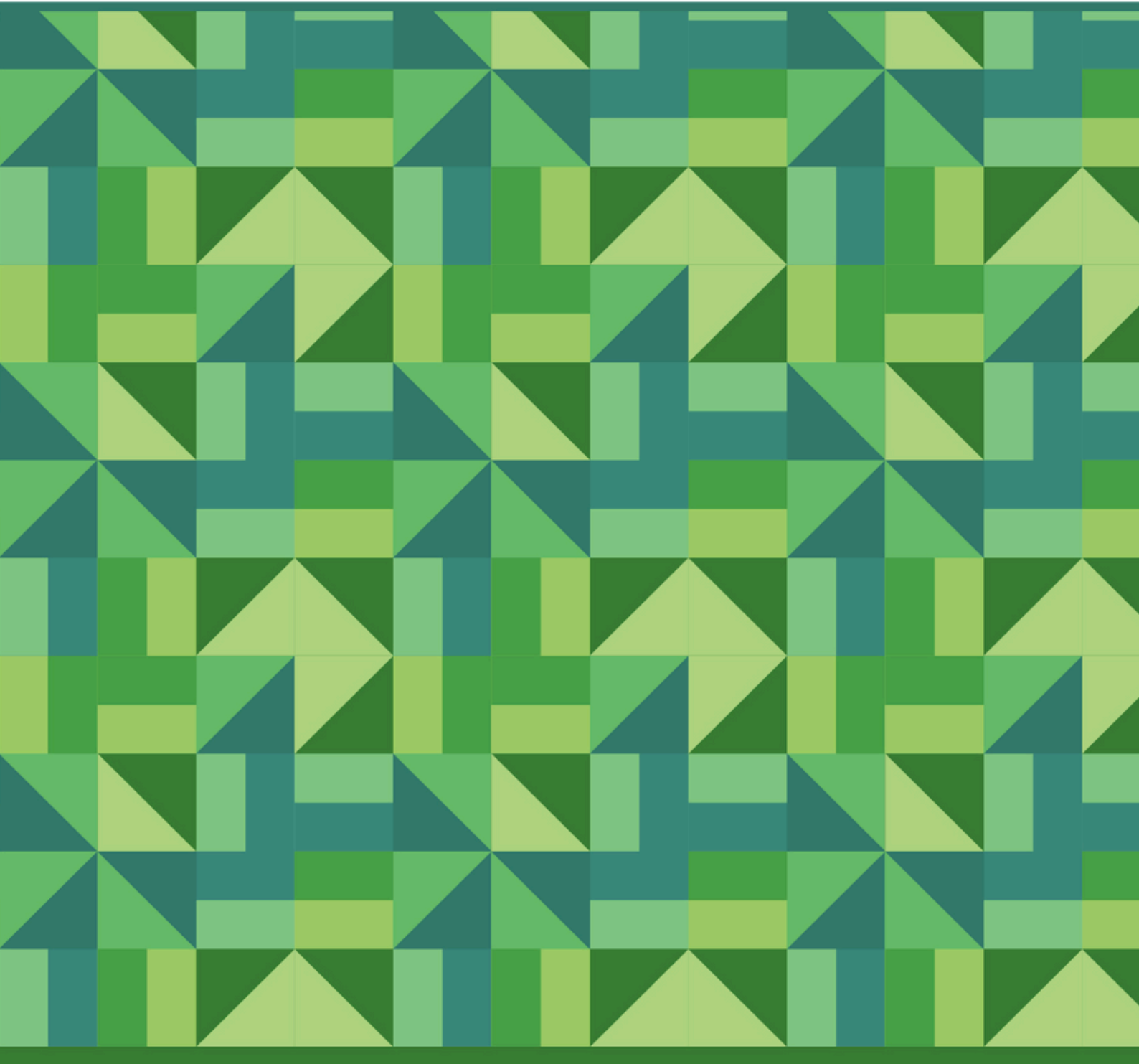


JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS



VOL. 4 NO.1, 2025

ISSN : 2809-6940 | E-ISSN : 2809-9087



Foreword from Editor in Chief of JCPR

Advancing Communication and Public Relations: Insights from Global Perspectives

JCPR Volume 4 No. 1 January 2025 contains a collection of scholarly articles reflecting recent developments in the field of communication and public relations, focusing on strategic issues of global and local relevance. The authors come from academic and professional institutions in Kenya, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Cote d'Ivoire, Africa; each providing unique perspectives based on their cultural and scholarly contexts. The articles cover a range of topics, from the role of social media in diplomacy and brand building, to gender-based communication style analysis, to studies on the implementation of public relations codes of ethics.

The examples of the article are: A study by Daniel Oloo Ong'ong'a of Mount Kenya University on diplomatic actors on platform X (formerly Twitter) that reveals the dynamics of power in digital communication: A study by Arifa Dani Anggit Widjaya and Latifa Ramonita of the LSPR Institute of Communication & Business, which highlights the relationship between public relations messages and loyalty among young people in Medan, Indonesia: Research by Emeke Precious Nwaoboli and Adédèjì Fred Aríjeníwà on media framing of gender equality for national development in Nigeria. The era of digital communication and globalization has demanded a different perspective, however the discourse in this volume is one of the alternatives.

The sustainability of publication depends on the quality of the articles submitted by the authors. JCPR also has dedicated reviewers and editors who support the process of a quality of JCPR. We express our gratitude to them and also express our appreciation to the institutions that have supported these studies. We realize that this work still needs improvement. We hope that JCPR can continue to improve and develop in future editions. Happy reading, hopefully it can provide inspiration and benefits for all readers.

Jakarta, January 2025
Editor in Chief of JCPR

Associate Professor Dr. Dra. Ulani Yunus, MM



Editor in Chief of JCPR
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dra. Ulani Yunus, MM

Journal of Communication and Public Relations (JCPR) | Volume 4 No.1, January 2025 is published by the LSPR Institute of Communication & Business. We invite experts, practitioners, and academicians in public relations and communication studies to submit their articles. This edition addresses various contemporary issues in these fields. Since 2024, JCPR has been published biannually, in January and July.

EDITORIAL BOARD OF JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS (JCPR)

EDITOR IN CHIEF:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dra. Ulani Yunus, MM (LSPR Institute of Communication & Business, Indonesia)

MANAGING EDITOR:

Noprita Herari, M.Ikom (LSPR Institute of Communication & Business, Indonesia)

EDITORIAL BOARD:

Prof. Panizza Ruth Allmark, Ph.D (Edith Cowan University, Australia)

Dr. Adam James Fenton (Coventry University, United Kingdom)

Prof. Dr. Nur Kholisoh, M.Si (Universitas Mercubuana, Indonesia)

Prof. Dr. Puji Lestari, S.IP, M.Si (Universitas Pembangunan Nasional Veteran Yogyakarta, Indonesia)

Xenia Angelica Wijayanto, S.H, M.Si (LSPR Institute of Communication & Business, Indonesia)

Pong Kok Shiong, Ph.D (United International College, China)

Chin Ying Shin, PhD (Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia)

Assist. Prof. Dr. Alichia Treerotchananon (Chiang Mai University, Thailand)

Assoc. Prof. Joan Tirwyn Hassan, Ph.D (Kaduna University, Nigeria)

PEER REVIEWERS:

Assoc. Prof. Maya Vassileva, Ph.D | Assoc. Prof. Dr. Wajid Zulqarnain | Dr. Wan Norbani Wan Noordin | Mohd Nur Najmi Bin Nuji, MA | Assoc. Prof. Dr. Novi Andayani Praptiningsih, M.Si | Dr. Rino F. Boer | Rudi Sukandar, Ph.D | Dr. Dewi Widowati | Taufan Teguh Akbari, Ph.D | Dr. Rubiyanto, MM

EDITORIAL ADDRESS:

LSPR Institute of Communication & Business


Jl. KH Mas Mansyur Kav. 35, Central Jakarta, DKI Jakarta 10220, Indonesia

Telp. (62) 21 - 5794 2471


E-mail: jcpr@lspr.edu

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/journal-of-communication-public-relations>

Website: <https://journal.lspr.edu/index.php/jcpr/index>



JOURNAL OF
COMMUNICATION &
PUBLIC RELATIONS



T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

MAPPING THE DISCOURSE OF POWER: DIPLOMATIC ACTORS ON X (FORMERLY TWITTER) <i>Daniel Oloo</i>	1
THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN PR MESSAGING AND LOYALTY IN YOUNG ADULT MARKETS: A STUDY FROM MEDAN CITY <i>Arifa Dani Anggit Widjaya, Latifa Ramonita</i>	19
BENIN PUBLICS' PERCEPTION OF MEDIA FRAMING OF GENDER EQUALITY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA <i>Emeke Precious Nwaoboli, Adédèjì Fred Arijeníwà</i>	39
IMPLEMENTATION OF TOURISM PLACE BRANDING MANAGEMENT IN INDONESIA THROUGH THE 'WONDERFUL INDONESIA' CAMPAIGN <i>Fasya Syifa Mutma, Reni Dyanasari</i>	55
RE-CONCEPTUALIZING PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES IN NIGERIA: A FRAMEWORK TO ADDRESS SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES <i>Nsini Anselem Eyo</i>	76
GENDER AND LANGUAGE: ANALYZING COMMUNICATION STYLES IN ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING <i>Mario Nugroho, Igantius Gatot Suseno</i>	102
SHIFTING COMMUNICATION THROUGH VIRTUAL INFLUENCERS DRIVEN METAVERSE REVOLUTION <i>Michel Gougou Saman</i>	118
PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLE OF @DEBRADS.ID ON INSTAGRAM IN PROMOTING THE VICTORIA RUN 2023 EVENT BY DEBRADS RACE MANAGEMENT <i>Tunggul Sahaan, Deddy Muharman</i>	140
AN ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES IN PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE AT UNIVERSITY K AND ST PAUL UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA <i>Samwel Nyabera, James Marwa Mwita</i>	155
ASSESSMENT OF THE ADHERENCE TO PUBLIC RELATIONS CODE OF ETHICS BY PRACTITIONERS IN LAGOS STATE <i>Chuddy Christian Oduenyi, Emeka Williams Etumnu</i>	170

Mapping the Discourse of Power: Diplomatic Actors on X (Formerly Twitter)

Daniel Oloo Ong'ong'a

Mount Kenya University, Thika, Kenya

Submitted: May 2024, Revised: October 2024, Accepted: December 2024

ABSTRACT

This study explored the impact of power dynamics on digital diplomacy by analyzing the Twitter usage of three diplomatic actors (the Chinese, UK, and US Embassies in Kenya). The research aimed to answer questions about who the diplomats prioritized for engagement, how they used Twitter in crisis communication, and how they became media actors by adopting media logic in their digital diplomacy practices. The results of the study showed that Twitter was utilized by diplomats to control the daily agenda, express opinions, and influence followers and media outlets. The Chinese and UK Embassies made use of the platform for formal communication and to communicate with their diaspora. The US ambassador followed online influencers to set the online conversations and expand their online presence. Meanwhile, the UK ambassador leveraged the media to drive foreign policy and tailor messages to the Kenyan audience. The findings also indicated that all embassies had adopted a media logic by following various media sources. The study also found that the Chinese embassy was quick to respond to any tweet that mentioned human rights issues in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, and used Twitter as a tool to correct misinformation. In conclusion, diplomats use Twitter as a tool to engage with different audiences and achieve their diplomatic goals through interactive strategies such as two-way communication, storytelling, influencer engagement, hashtag campaigns, and media amplification. However, diplomats need to constructively engage with the digital public to accomplish their goals, while avoiding the risk of their messages being misconstrued.

Keywords: *crisis communication, digital diplomacy, diplomatic engagement, interactive strategies, power dynamics.*

INTRODUCTION

This paper examined the discourse of power influence on X (formerly Twitter) in the context of digital diplomacy by analyzing the performance of three diplomatic actors in Kenya on X (formerly Twitter). X (formerly Twitter) has become an increasingly popular tool for digital diplomacy (Ongonga, 2020), as it provides a quick and easy platform for government officials and diplomats to communicate with the public as well as with each other (Chhabra, 2020). It has become an effective tool for public diplomacy, which is the use of communication to influence and build relationships with foreign public (Duncombe, 2018).

Therefore, X (formerly Twitter) allows government officials and diplomats to share their opinions, policies, and updates with a large audience in real-time (Summa, 2020). This helps to build trust and credibility with the public, as well as shape public opinion on various issues (Kuncoro et al., 2024). For example, the U.S. State Department uses X (formerly Twitter) to communicate with the public about its policies and initiatives as well as to respond to questions and concerns from the public (Hikari Ishido et al., 2018).

In addition to public diplomacy, X (formerly Twitter) is used for crisis communication (Çerçi, 2024). During natural disasters, political upheavals, and other emergencies, X (formerly Twitter) has provided real-time updates and information to the public, helping to dispel rumors and misinformation (Manor & Segev, 2020). This is particularly important in countries where traditional media is censored or inaccessible.

Furthermore, X (formerly Twitter) for digital diplomacy can facilitate two-way communication. Diplomats use X (formerly Twitter) to listen to the public's opinions and respond in real-time, which helps to build better relationships and foster greater understanding between countries (Valencia & Moscato, 2020). This type of interaction helps to dispel stereotypes and reduce misunderstandings between different cultures and communities (Oloo, 2022). It has also provided a platform for governments and diplomats to engage in multilateral diplomacy (Schuster & Kolley, 2020). This means that they use Twitter to engage in discussions and negotiations with other governments and organizations on a global scale (Bjola, 2016).

For example, the United Nations uses X (formerly Twitter) to engage with governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders on a range of international issues, including peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development (Ratner, 2020). Moreover, X (formerly Twitter) also helps to increase transparency and accountability in diplomacy (Odjo, 2024). Governments and diplomats use Twitter to share information and updates on their activities and decisions, allowing the public to hold them accountable (Ifrañ, et al., 2023). This helps to build trust and credibility with the public and increase transparency in the decision-making process.

Twitter in global politics is not a new subject, as different countries use it to their advantage. For example, in the US, Twitter has been used as a tool for public diplomacy, where the government and other official entities communicate directly with the public (Tsvetkova et al., 2020; Alper, 2024). The U.S. government agencies and officials, including the State Department and the White House, regularly use Twitter to release official statements, share news and updates, and engage with the public (Odabaş, 2023). In the United Kingdom, Twitter has been adopted as a key tool for digital diplomacy, with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office using the platform to communicate with people around the world and to promote the UK's foreign policy priorities (Gavrilina & Surma, 2020).

British ambassadors and diplomats also use Twitter to share their perspectives on international events and to engage with local communities. While in China, the use of Twitter in digital diplomacy is more limited due to government censorship and

restrictions on access to the platform (Huang & Wang, 2020). Nevertheless, some Chinese diplomats and government officials have used Twitter to engage with the international community and promote the country's perspectives on global issues (Zhang & Ong'ong'a, 2021).

While existing literature highlights the use of Twitter by diplomatic actors on the global stage, there remains a significant gap in understanding how this platform is utilized in developing countries, particularly Kenya, during crises. Investigating this context is crucial, as Twitter has become an essential tool for digital diplomacy (Özdemir, 2024), offering a quick and accessible medium for government officials and diplomats to engage with the public and interact with one another.

This study explores digital diplomacy dynamics during crisis communication by examining the activities of three key diplomatic actors—the United States, the United Kingdom, and China—on Twitter. It seeks to document how these actors leverage the platform to influence discourses of power and navigate crisis communication challenges.

Specifically, the research focuses on three key areas: identifying the audiences these diplomatic actors prioritize for engagement, analyzing how they utilize Twitter during crises, and examining their interactive strategies to adopt media logic and establish themselves as media actors. By addressing these dimensions, the study contributes to understanding the evolving role of digital diplomacy in shaping international relations and communication practices in Kenya.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

As Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) operations and programs become constantly entangled with digital media, the activities of MFA become more regular. The increase in foreign and diplomatic traditions that describe diplomatic culture and strategies is perhaps better symbolized by the growth in international affairs and ideas about how diplomats perceive and engage in diplomatic life. While theories aim to account for cultural perception and behavior, many diplomats see themselves more as amorphous than malleable and/or intangible; their true identities are lost in translation (Cercel & Săftescu, 2015).

It is becoming increasingly important to understand modern diplomacy as more and more ambassadors and institutions can focus on digital media to serve the public in the future (Frey, 2024). Technology is also important in shaping the "the art of the conceivable" in the field of diplomacy — not only through the amount of production but also by complex measurements and attempts to connect it to larger strategic goals (Cooper et al., 2013).

Digital diplomacy can reinterpret and extend the essence of the international institution by providing new avenues for influence in complex relations, new levels of participation in the digital forum, and alternative outlets for advocating diplomatic interests (Barman, 2024). Clarifying the principle of information sovereignty is important, in part, because historically diplomats have had the position of knowledge

guardians (Manor, 2019). One of the greatest hazards that diplomats face in the current information age is that newly empowered decision-makers often ignore their guidance and counsel because of an abundance of information and contact channels.

The area of geopolitical operation across digital channels – especially on social media – indicates that there is a more egalitarian space for engagement in foreign relations. Simply placed, more forms of participants, from individuals to collectives operating as lobbying platforms or terrorist organizations, practice a well-documented model of organization that has real impacts on international affairs. Since this operation is essentially anchored and allowed in interconnected contact (and innovations), it removes the conventional barriers that distinguish foreign policy bureaucrats from powerbrokers.

Technology-enabled potential for reform, through mediated politics and networked organization, poses real threats to the exclusive role of diplomats. If this kind of assertion is a thread that underscores many of the more expansive arguments regarding modern diplomacy as deeply disruptive. There is a point that foreign policy actors have a distinct place to draw on the position inside the MFA and embassy systems that cover the globe.

Diplomats act as a boundary-and networking role-fillers are used to connect different constituencies and stakeholders. Diplomats seek to align the needs of their governments with an increasing position in providing global public goods, problems like immigration and human trafficking, and patent protection. They also work closely with other international partners to bolster human rights and safety regulations. Diplomats serve to preserve the existing state of affairs in foreign relations.

Digital diplomacy remains to be seen whether it is a reflection of a threat or an adjustment of present circumstances. The application of digital diplomacy channels, as perceived through numerous nations and MFAs, tends to be: mainly based on engagement instead of strategy; implying that MFAs are likely to be more involved in whether or not they are seen to use their online profiles, as compared to whether or not they are active would use them to accomplish diplomatic objectives (Baykız & Açıklın, 2024).

The influence of public diplomacy is often challenging to measure due to the difficulty in linking efforts to changes in perception or behavior and the high costs of evaluation. However, digital technology has transformed public diplomacy evaluation by enabling alternative methods. For example, analyzing agenda-setting, presence expansion, and conversations on platforms like Twitter used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies can provide insights into mutual understanding, collaboration, and engagement. This approach offers a faster, cost-effective way to assess the impact of digital public diplomacy without relying on surveys or interviews (Rachmawati, et al., 2020).

There is undeniably an increasing number of cases of negotiators turning to ICTs to accomplish goals and to expand the limits of diplomatic creativity. For scholarships, there are still wider concerns regarding the importance of digital diplomacy to the

broader definition of diplomacy itself – beyond the "big picture" discussion on the spread of force and the macro threats that technology presents to the calculation of electronic security and information warfare. In reality, there are other cases where emerging media intersects with diplomacy and foreign affairs. The evolving and complex task of regulating the global governance of the Internet is mostly absent from this modern diplomatic dialogue. Therefore, the study on how diplomatic actors use X to communicate with the public offers us a new perspective on conducting digital diplomacy studies.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a multiple case study approach to address the research questions and explore the use of digital diplomacy on X (formerly Twitter) by the embassies of three global powers—the United States, the United Kingdom, and China—in Kenya from 2019 to 2020. These countries were purposefully selected as they represent key global rivals, each with distinct diplomatic strategies and communication styles. By focusing on these embassies, the study aimed to analyze how digital diplomacy is employed as a tool for influence and engagement in a Kenyan context.

The multiple case study method allowed the investigation of complex phenomena within varied contexts, making it particularly suitable for exploring digital platforms. As Coombs (2022) emphasized, case studies are effective in studies conducted in multifaceted settings because they help transcend simplistic cause-and-effect assumptions, facilitating a deeper understanding of nuanced interactions. This method was integral to dissecting the unique characteristics of each embassy's digital diplomacy strategies while identifying overarching patterns and differences.

This research was exploratory, enabling the integration of diverse data sources to uncover the study problem's deeper dimensions. Given the intricate nature of digital platform studies, this approach provided flexibility and depth, accommodating the dynamic nature of diplomatic communication on X. The analysis focused on specific key figures and their discussions, narratives, and interactions on the platform, providing insight into the extent and style of digital diplomacy practiced in Kenya.

The table below outlines the diplomatic actors whose X accounts were analyzed to understand their digital diplomacy efforts:

Table 1: Diplomatic Actor Engaged on X (Formerly Twitter)

No	Diplomatic Actor	Account Name on X
1	Jane Marriott (British High Commissioner)	@JaneMarriottUK
2	Kyle MC Cartner (Ambassador)	@USAmbKenya
3	China Embassy in Kenya (Ambassador)	@ChineseEmbKenya

Source: Data Collected by Author, 2024

The table identifies the specific individuals or institutions representing their countries on X. By examining their accounts, the study captured the narratives,

interactions, and strategies utilized by these actors to engage with Kenyan audiences, promote national interests, and manage diplomatic relations.

This methodological approach not only facilitated a comparative analysis of digital diplomacy practices but also provided insights into how each actor leveraged X to navigate their distinct diplomatic agendas within Kenya.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Crisis Communication and Digital Diplomacy

The following section presents the findings of the cases on how the three diplomatic actors performed their diplomatic tasks during the three crisis occasions. Digital diplomacy performed well during the crisis, and hence, diplomatic actors adopted these tools for crisis communication.

Table 2. Cases and Diplomatic Actor Engaged on Twitter

Cases	Diplomatic Actor Engaged
1 st Case	Jane Marriott
2 nd Case	Kyle MC Cartner)
3 rd Case	China Embassy in Kenya

Source: Data Collected by Author, 2024

The first case of COVID-19 impacted the world, in which Kenya is among the countries that have been hit hardest by the pandemic (Mutua & Ong'ong'a, 2020). Therefore, it is believed that the diplomatic actors would be more concerned and curated messages either to assist, support, or share their best practices on tackling the pandemic.

The second case is that during 2019-2020, Kenya campaigned to be elected to be a member of the UN non-permanent Security Council. This seat to Kenya is important since it would ensure that resources are allocated to support her effort in fighting insecurity issues in East Africa. For instance, Kenya's image abroad is tainted due to saddened and tactfully planned terrorist attacks in the capital city and other strategic areas by al-Shabaab, including the US army training camp in Kenya.

The third and final case is that the US prepared to have its presidential elections. Therefore, it was assumed that the US diplomatic actors in Kenya would take time to educate Kenyans on issues of democracy in the United States and fail to address issues that affected Kenya, like the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) process, which is aimed at amending Kenya's constitution. In doing so, the section interrogates how these diplomatic actors employed interactive strategies on Twitter.

Case-1-Communicating COVID-19 pandemic

The US ambassador in Kenya focused on promoting the country's tourism industry after the partial lifting of the COVID-19 lockdown. He shared a video on Twitter of the wildebeest migration and encouraged people to visit tourist sites, which he argued would help restore the country's economy and provide jobs in the industry. This tweet received mixed reactions, with some followers agreeing while others criticized it, saying

Africa is more than just wild animals. Some politicians also used the opportunity to criticize US policies in Kenya, including Dr. Miguna Miguna who argued that foreign tourists were not helping Kenya's economy during the pandemic. The ambassador humorously responded to the criticism and attempted to bring light to the Kenyans facing problems like job losses.



Figure 1: Dialogic Trends on Twitter (Documented by Author, 2020).

The UK High Commissioner on Twitter

On the other hand, the UK high commissioner in Kenya took a more formal approach on Twitter, announcing the UK's plans to send COVID-19 vaccines to support Kenya's vaccination programs. The commissioner used the platform to amplify information on the programs they were implementing in the country and shared details of meetings between UK and Kenyan officials.

The UK High Commissioner in Kenya focused on using Twitter to communicate information on various initiatives and programs to strengthen the relationship between Kenya and the UK. The focus was on areas such as trade, regional security, and health. The Commissioner also announced the UK's plans to ship COVID-19 vaccines to support Kenya's vaccination programs. Most tweets were formal and business-like, emphasizing recorded video messages about regulations and control measures put in place to prevent future COVID-19 cases. The Commissioner also focused on the UK's efforts to help families in Mombasa through cash transfer programs and their commitment to returning stolen assets by corrupt officials to the people of Kenya.

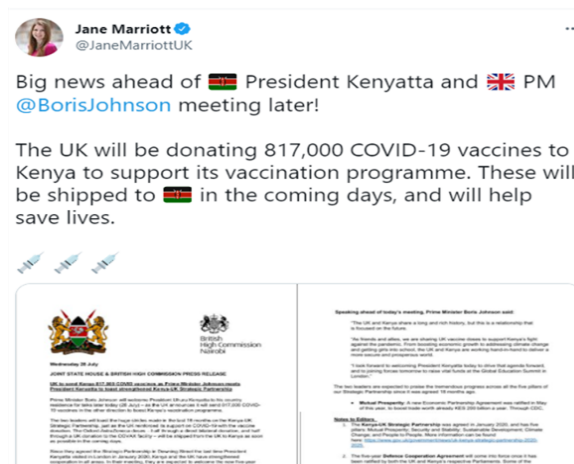


Figure 2: UK High Commissioner on COVID-19 (Documented by Author, 2020).

Chinese Embassy on Twitter

The Chinese embassy in Kenya used Twitter to communicate China's success in handling COVID-19. They attached press releases to the tweets to be picked up by the media and reported as news. The Chinese embassy's strategy of mediatization allowed them to set the agenda and become a source of information on how to fight the pandemic (Alden & Chan, 2021). The embassy reported on the improving situation in China and the resumption of factory work to provide an example for other countries.

In addition, it used Twitter to communicate about the success of China in handling the COVID-19 pandemic and to set an agenda as a source and point of reference on how to fight it (Wang, 2022). The tweets were backed up by communication from China's spokesperson and included daily updates on disease control and hope for defeating the virus (Song, et al., 2023). The embassy also retweeted tweets from Xinhua news agencies that emphasized that the virus does not respect nation or religion and is a threat to global humanity and that the response to the outbreak is a "test" for China's system and capacity for governance. To avoid miscommunication, most tweets from the Chinese embassy originated from its state media.



Figure 3: Chinese Embassy Tweet on COVID-19 Situation in China (Documented by Author, 2020).

Case 2-Kenya Winning the UN Security Council Non-Permanent Seat

In 2019-2020, Kenya ran a campaign to be elected to the UN Security Council, which was important because Kenya is a crucial security partner to the US and UK in the fight against terrorism. The US worked with Kenya on border security, anti-terrorism efforts, community engagement, and rule of law. Kenya won the non-permanent UN security council seat during the COVID-19 pandemic and became part of Mexico, India, Norway, and Ireland. It was claimed that China supported Djibouti, who was also competing for the seat, and the US preferred Kenya. The Chinese embassy in Kenya tweeted a farewell meeting between the Kenyan Foreign Office and the Chinese ambassador, and the ambassador later congratulated Kenya on its election. The reason for the delay in congratulations from China was because of its influence in Djibouti, where China has a naval base, and it preferred Djibouti over Kenya because of its ties to the US and concerns over African debt traps caused by Chinese-financed infrastructure projects. The Chinese embassy tactfully did not show any favor, but the ambassador counteracted the allegations.



Figure 4: Chinese Embassy on Tweet Countering West Narrative (Documented by Author, 2020)

The UK high commissioner took to Twitter to congratulate Kenya on securing the UN security council seat, claiming that they were excited to be working with Kenya on the biggest international stage. This tweet means that the UK is working with Kenya on security issues at the local level while Kenya is being elevated to the Council, which means that their cooperation could continue to prosper. For example, through this cooperation, it means that the UK could continue to implement its foreign policies in Kenya, which includes training of Kenyan security organs on handling small weapons and explosives, among others.



Figure 5: UK High Commissioner Tweet on Security Council Seat (Documented by Author, 2020).

Case-3-BBI-Bridge-Building Kenya's Initiative

In comparison to the UK high commissioner and the Chinese ambassador in Kenya, the US ambassador engaged Kenyans on Twitter on democratic issues. In his tweet, the ambassador alluded to the fact that the BBI was not his concern, but rather Kenya's. Although the ambassador was determined to avoid accusations that America was interfering in Kenyan internal political affairs, he was the first to comment on American companies' involvement in Kenya's democratic process.

These findings suggest that the US ambassador uses Twitter to promote American foreign policy, including issues of governance and democracy (Manor, 2017). Although the ambassador did not only discuss democracy, he curated his tweets to attract followers to gain more support and establish a relationship. Given the response time on the tweets, the ambassador was quick to respond and framed his messages to encourage more Twitter engagement (Pertiwi & Purwanti, 2023).



Figure 6: US Embassy Interactive Tweet on Democracy (Documented by Author, 2020).

Diplomatic Actors Assigning Blame to One Another

According to the study, UK diplomatic actors blamed the US for how democracy was handled after supporters of President Trump marched to Capitol Hill to prevent Congress from certifying President-elect Joe Biden's election victory. This incident was

tweeted by the UK Prime Minister, calling it a “disgraceful” scene in the US Congress and claiming that the US stands for “democracy” around the world. On the other hand, the UK high commissioner followed suit in urging the US to show its “democratic strength”.

In addition, the US embassy published a statement stating that while the overwhelming majority of those who went to the US Capitol “protested peacefully”, there were “criminals” who committed “violent acts” of “terror” against democracy. These criminals would be held accountable since they did not succeed in stopping the Constitutionally mandated count of the Electoral College vote and the US would have a “peaceful” transfer of power on January 20, and democracy cannot “survive” without the rule of law.

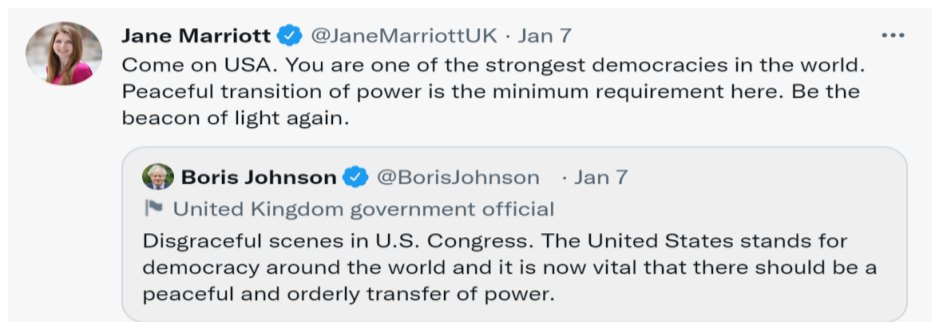


Figure 7: UK High Commissioner Tweet on Democracy (Documented by Author, 2020).

On the other hand, China, did not pay attention to talking about US issues on Twitter in Kenya, but through its spokesperson Hua Chunying, compared the events in Hong Kong in 2019 where the city’s legislature was stormed to being more “severe” than those on Capitol Hill, where not one of the demonstrators died. The remarks from the Chinese spokesperson postulate how the Chinese government views democracy. It also revealed the tension between the US and China. In such an event, the Chinese embassy and ambassador in Kenya did not tweet on this issue but let the senior authorities do so.

Interactive Communication Strategies

The US ambassador to Kenya has adopted an interactive communication strategy to engage with his Twitter followers’ accounts. This strategy ensures that he maintains relationships with his digital public (Lane & Kent, 2018; Taylor & Kent, 2014). In so doing, he strives to achieve his foreign goal of winning the hearts and minds of Kenyans. As an example, the content of the tweets of the ambassador includes elements of humor, amusement, and allows the followers to ask questions. Such questions are promptly answered by the ambassador, with the intention of attracting more followers.

For example, as can be seen in Figure 8, the ambassador was stressing the importance of social distancing in order to avoid the spread of COVID-19. He used the example of the wildebeest to show that if Kenyans continued to interact in that way, they could be at risk of being infected by the virus. He also used the migration of the wildebeest to promote Kenya’s tourism, even though many foreign tourists had already

left the country. When his follower asked him whether the wildebeest were tested, he responded that he was offended. This example shows that the US ambassador and the US, in general, promote environmental protection and propagate the values of climate change and response to nature.



Figure 8: US Ambassador Interactive Strategy on Twitter (Documented by Author, 2020).

The US ambassador use Twitter to promote American foreign policy and to engage with Kenyans on issues of governance and democracy. The ambassador is characterized as quick to respond to tweets and framing his messages in a way that encourages further engagement. On the other hand, the UK high commissioner tends to be selective in her responses to tweets and does not often address questions about UK policies that affect Kenyans.

In one instance, instead of directly responding to questions about the alleged involvement of the British Army Training Unit in starting a fire that impacted wildlife and locals, the high commissioner made a video to address the issue but did not respond to specific questions or comments. The Chinese embassy, in contrast, prefers to use email for communication and uses its Twitter account mainly for official communication in formal language. The embassy is quick to respond to tweets related to China and human rights issues in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, using Twitter as a tool to correct misinformation and disinformation and protect China's image globally.



Figure 1: Chinese Embassy Tweet on Human Right Issues (Documented by Author, 2020).

This study investigated the potential discourse of power influence by mapping how the three diplomatic actors performed on Twitter and providing answers to questions on: who the diplomatic actors prioritized to engage; how they used Twitter during crisis communication; and how they employed interactive strategies to become media actors in adopting media logic in digital diplomacy practice.

The findings of this study revealed that, identically, Twitter is used to set the agenda of the day, express opinions, and influence followers and the media on what diplomats think is best to report. Diplomatic actors wield power over their followers and use their networks on the Twitter platform to connect with other powerful organizations, such as the presidency, international organizations, and heads of state. The Chinese and UK embassies frequently use Twitter platforms for formal communication.

In addition, Twitter is used as a tool for digital diaspora diplomacy, communicating, coordinating consular services, and getting updates on what is happening within and outside their country of residence (Manor & Adiku, 2021). The three diplomatic actors leverage Twitter as a tool for amplifying information on the programs that they are undertaking in Kenya.

Further, the study also found that the US ambassador follows online influencers to set the online conversation and expand their online presence. The UK ambassador in Kenya uses the media as a mouthpiece to drive foreign policy and provides the opportunity to tailor messages to the Kenyan audience. Overall results show that all the embassies have adopted a media logic by following the various media at their disposal.

It is also interesting to note that, during the study period, the Chinese embassy follows the Twitter accounts of the Russian Embassy and the UK High Commissioner to Kenya but not that of the US embassy, which can be alluded to as the global political power tussle between China and the US being taken to foreign countries. China and Russia are close allies in the eastern region, and this friendship is also evident abroad. A rich and stable China is essential for Russia. China requires a powerful and thriving Russia, and they have no desire to become an exclusive group as true partners and

excellent neighbors. It's simply difficult to build a gap between China and Russia or promote dissension.

The majority of the tweets that originated from the Chinese embassy in Kenya were from its state-owned media. This was to avoid any miscommunication, and communication about the COVID-19 pandemic was swift and carefully crafted. This strategy of mediatization allowed it to set an agenda and become a source of information and a point of reference on how to fight the pandemic.

Additionally, the study found that after supporters of President Trump forced their way to Capitol Hill to prevent Congress from certifying President-elect Joe Biden's election victory, the UK's diplomatic actors blamed the US for how democracy was handled. China did not pay attention to talking about US democracy on Twitter, but through its spokesperson, it compared the events in Hong Kong in 2019, where the city's legislature was stormed, to be more severe than those on Capitol Hill, where none of the demonstrators died. The remarks from the Chinese spokesperson postulate how the Chinese government views democracy.

It is important to note that the US ambassador was determined to avoid allegations that America was involving itself in the internal political affairs of Kenya but was the first to comment on the involvement of American companies in Kenya's democratic process. This means that diplomatic actors try to keep their online engagement with their audiences to a minimum for fear of their messages being misconstrued (Oloo, 2021, 2022; Ong'Ong'A, 2022; Ong'ong'a, 2021).

Although this is a good strategy for digital diplomacy, there is a need for diplomats to constructively engage with the digital public to accomplish their goals. The Chinese ambassador is rarely involved in tweeting about politics. But whenever he does so, the tweet is framed in a way to show how China's political power stands out over the rest. This finding indicates the level of engagement on political issues that diplomats may want to achieve, China is seen as a country that is controlled, and therefore, its diplomats' involvement in other countries' politics may be contrary to their foreign policy of not interfering with other countries' internal affairs.

This study also revealed that the Chinese embassy is quick to respond to any tweet that involves and mentions China and the alleged human rights issues in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia, and it is ready to correct such information, therefore using Twitter as a corrective tool for misinformation and disinformation while protecting China's image globally.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that diplomats use Twitter to engage with different audiences and achieve their diplomatic goals through various interactive strategies. These strategies include two-way communication, storytelling, influencer engagement, hashtag campaigns, and media amplification. They also use Twitter to respond to questions, provide information, build relationships, expand their reach and influence, bring attention to specific issues, and amplify their messages on international events and issues.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role of X (formerly Twitter) as a platform for digital diplomacy, enabling diplomats to engage audiences, influence narratives, and amplify messages. Through two-way communication, storytelling, influencer collaborations, hashtag campaigns, and media amplification, diplomats use X to clarify issues, align messaging with audience expectations, and promote their nations' interests. Leveraging local influencers further enhances public diplomacy efforts, fostering deeper connections with local populations and amplifying national agendas.

While X proves effective in combating misinformation, enhancing global image, and facilitating international dialogue, its use varies among diplomatic actors, with strategies ranging from formal communication to influencer-driven engagement. However, this study acknowledges limitations, such as its focus on online interactions, which may not fully capture offline dynamics, and the potential influence of changing diplomatic roles over time.

Despite these constraints, the findings underscore X's growing importance in global diplomacy and its broader implications for international relations and public relations practices. Future research should integrate in-depth interviews and longitudinal analyses to explore evolving diplomatic strategies on digital platforms. This study contributes to understanding digital diplomacy and offers actionable insights for diplomats and policymakers navigating the complexities of modern communication.

BIODATA

Dr. Daniel Oloo Ong'Ong'a, Ph.D., is currently a lecturer and a postgraduate coordinator at the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Mount Kenya University. Oloo has published intensively in the fields of digital media and digital diplomacy. His interests include digital diplomacy and great power competitions among the US, the UK, and China in Africa. Currently, he is focusing on international relations and digital public relations. Oloo's Orcid ID: 0000-0002-9587-6210

REFERENCES

- Alden, C., & Chan, K. (2021). *Twitter and Digital Diplomacy: China and COVID-19*. LSE IDEAS. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/Assets/Documents/updates/LSE-IDEAS-Twitter-and-Digital-Diplomacy-China-and-COVID-19.pdf>
- Alper, D. Ö. (2024). Public Relations Discourse on X (Twitter) and Analysis of Public Relations. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 3(1), 14-26. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105003120242>
- Barman, S. (2024). Digital Diplomacy: The Influence of Digital Platforms on Global Diplomacy and Foreign Policy. *VIDYA - A Journal of Gujarat University*, 3(1), 61-75. <https://doi.org/10.47413/vidya.v3i1.304>
- Baykız, T., & Açıklan, Ş. N. (2024). The Digitalization of Diplomacy Maturity Model (Dd-Mm): A New Model for Optimizing Diplomatic Digitalization. *Journal of Nusantara Studies (JONUS)*, 9(2), 441-473. <https://doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol9iss2pp441-473>
- Bjola, C. (2016). Diplomatic Ethics: The Limits of Loyalty. In *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*.
- Çerçi, Ü. Ö. (2024). A “Notification” on the Use of Social Media as A Means of Community Resilience in Crisis Management. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 3(2), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105003220241>
- Chhabra, R. (2020). Twitter Diplomacy : A Brief Analysis. *ORF Issue Brief*, 335, 1–12.
- Coombs, H. (2022). *Case Study Research Defined [White Paper]*. Southern Utah University. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7604301>
- Duncombe, C. (2017). Twitter and Transformative Diplomacy: Social Media and Iran–US Relations. *International Affairs*, 93(3), 545–562. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix048>
- Duncombe, C. (2018). Twitter and the Challenges of Digital Diplomacy. *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, 38(2), 91–100. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sais.2018.0019>
- Frey, C. (2024). Digital Diplomacy: The Impact of Technology on Modern Diplomacy and Foreign Policy. Current Realities and Future Prospects. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4864962>
- Fuchs, C. (2018). *Christian Fuchs-Social Media_ A Critical Introduction-SAGE Publications Ltd (2013)*. SAGE Publications.
- Gavrilina, S., & Surma, I. (2020). UK Government and The Media: A Form of Interaction. *Sovremennaya Evropa*, 2020(1). <https://doi.org/10.15211/soveurope120204958>
- Hikari Ishido, Yuki Tashiro, & Richard Liang. (2018). US President Donald Trump’s Twitter Analysis and His Trade Policy Agenda. *International Relations and Diplomacy*, 6(9). <https://doi.org/10.17265/2328-2134/2018.09.002>
- Huang, Z. A., & Wang, R. (2020). ‘Panda Engagement’ in China’s Digital Public Diplomacy. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 30(2), 118–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2020.1725075>
- Ifiran, M. R., Prihatini, E., & Mursitama, T. N. (2023). Twiplomacy by Indonesian Ambassadors and Embassies. *E3S Web of Conferences*, 388, 04005. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202338804005>

- Kuncoro, H. R., Hasanah, K., Sari, D. L., & Kurniawati, E. (2024). Algorithmic Influence: Twitter's Role in Shaping Public Discourse and Amplifying Radical Content. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 549-553. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-247-7_55
- Lane, A., & Kent, M. L. (2018). Dialogic Engagement. In *The Handbook of Communication Engagement* (pp. 61–72). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119167600.ch5>
- Manor, I. (2017). America's selfie - Three Years Later. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 13(4), 308–324. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-017-0060-z>
- Manor, I., & Adiku, G. A. (2021). From “Traitors” to “Saviours”: A Longitudinal Analysis of Ethiopian, Kenyan and Rwandan Embassies' Practice of Digital Diaspora Diplomacy. *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 28(3), 403–427. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10220461.2021.1948915>
- Manor, I., & Segev, E. (2020). Social Media Mobility: Leveraging Twitter Networks in Online Diplomacy. *Global Policy*, 11(2), 233–244. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12799>
- Mutua, S. N., & Ong'ong'a, D. O. (2020). Online News Media Framing of COVID-19 Pandemic: Probing the Initial Phases of the Disease Outbreak in International Media. *European Journal of Interactive Multimedia and Education*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.30935/ejimed/8402>
- Odabaş, S. D. and M. (2023, July 26). 8 Facts about Americans and Twitter as it Rebrands to X. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/07/26/8-facts-about-americans-and-twitter-as-it-rebrands-to-x/>
- Odjo, Z. C., (2024). Enhancing Diplomatic Engagement through Twitter: A Case Study of the Republic of Benin. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4891129> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4891129>
- Oloo, O. D. (2021). Exploring the Social Media Culture of Commenting: Youtube Users Sentiments of “Misinformation” on International News Media Sphere. *Social Communication*, 7(1), 90–100. <https://doi.org/10.2478/sc-2021-0009>
- Oloo, O. D. (2022). The Role of Online News Consumers in Lessening the Extent of Misinformation on Social Media Platforms. *Journal Communication Spectrum*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.36782/jcs.v12i2.2155>
- Ong'ong'a, D. O. (2022). Online Citizen Perception of China's Engagement in Kenya. In *China's International Communication and Relationship Building* (pp. 233–247). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003254157-18>
- Ong'ong'a, O. (2021). Countering the New Media Podia: Youth and 'Fake News' in Kenya. *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, 8(4), 8–16. DOI:10.34293/sijash.v8i4.3033
- Ongonga, O. D. (2020). Syndrome-Analysis of New Media and Political Economy in 21st Century. *Journal of New Media and Mass Communication*, 6(1), 8–11. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.91.2020.61.8.11>

- Özdemir, M. (2024). The Impact of Twitter on Digital Diplomacy in the Context of International Media. In: Akilli, E., Güneş, B., Güner, O. (eds) *Digital Diplomacy in the OSCE Region. Contributions to International Relations*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-50966-7_9
- Pertiwi, N. Y., & Purwanti, N. D. (2023). Twitter for Public organization: Communication and Public Engagement in the Generation Unlimited Initiative. *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.7454/jkmi.v12i1.1057>
- Rachmawati, I., Kodong, F. R., & Angretnowati, Y. (2020). Measuring The Effectiveness Of Influence In Digital Public Diplomacy. *Conference: LPPM UPN "VETERAN" Yogyakarta International Conference Series 2020*. DOI:10.31098/pss.v1i1.205 or https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346792964_Measuring_The_Effectiveness_Of_Influence_In_Digital_Public_Diplomacy
- Ratner, A. (2020). Strategic Communication in the Era of Digital Diplomacy. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*.
- Schuster, J., & Kolleck, N. (2020). The Global Diffusion of Social Innovations – An analysis of Twitter Communication Networks Related to Inclusive Education. *Frontiers in Education*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2020.492010>
- Song, W., Ruan, Y., & Sun, S. (2023). Twitter Diplomacy and China's Strategic Narrative during the early COVID-19 crisis. *Asian Perspective*, 47(4), 683-705. <https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2023.a912750>
- Summa, G. (2020). 'We the People' in the Twitter Age: Digital Diplomacy and the Social Legitimacy of the United Nations. *LSE: Media and Communications*, 4-65. <https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/working-paper-series/WP-63.pdf>
- Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (2014). Dialogic Engagement: Clarifying Foundational Concepts. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(5), 384–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2014.956106>
- Tsvetkova, N., Rushchin, D., Shiryayev, B., Yarygin, G., & Tsvetkov, I. (2020). Sprawling in Cyberspace: Barack Obama's Legacy in Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2020.1724425>
- Valencia, R. J., & Moscato, D. (2020). Navigating #ObamainCuba: How Twitter Mediates Frames and History in Public Diplomacy. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41254-020-00162-7>
- Wang, Q. (2022). Using Social Media for Agenda Setting in Chinese Government's Communications during the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 46(4), 373-394. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01968599221105099>
- Zhang, Y., & Ong'ong'a, D. O. (2021). Unveiling China's Digital Diplomacy: A Comparative Analysis of CGTN Africa and BBC News Africa on Facebook. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 205789112110682. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911211068217>

The Interplay between PR Messaging and Loyalty in Young Adult Markets: A Study from Medan City

Arifa Dani Anggit Widjaya¹, Latifa Ramonita²
^{1,2}LSPR Institute of Communication & Business

Submitted: June 2024, Revised: November 2024, Accepted: December 2024

ABSTRACT

As public awareness of environmental and social issues grows, consumers increasingly gravitate toward brands that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. This shift has prompted businesses to launch campaigns that address these concerns, effectively aligning their values with those of their target audiences. Within the beauty industry, The Body Shop's "Be Seen Be Heard" campaign serves as a prime example, promoting environmental and social values while engaging consumers. This study examines the relationship between such public relations messaging and consumer loyalty among young adults in Medan City. A quantitative research approach was employed, with data collected from 100 respondents through structured questionnaires. Correlation analysis revealed a strong and significant positive relationship between the PR campaign and consumer loyalty, with a coefficient of 0.823. This result underscores the campaign's effectiveness in fostering loyalty within the young urban demographic by aligning brand messaging with issues of social and environmental relevance. The findings emphasize the strategic role of public relations in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors, particularly among socially conscious young adults. They also highlight the importance of authentic, values-driven campaigns in cultivating long-term brand loyalty. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the interplay between PR messaging and consumer loyalty, offering practical insights for businesses aiming to strengthen their market presence in the era of sustainability.

Keywords: *green consumers, pr campaign, public relations, consumer loyalty, sustainability values.*

INTRODUCTION

As global awareness of environmental and social issues grows, consumers increasingly consider a company's actions in addressing these concerns as a significant factor in their purchasing decisions (Populix, 2022). This shift in consumer behavior has led to a preference for businesses with sustainable practices (The Jakarta Post, 2022). Among the companies that champion sustainability is The Body Shop, a British cosmetics, skincare, and fragrance company founded in 1976 by Anita Roddick. With over 3,000 stores across 65 countries, The Body Shop has consistently prioritized ethically sourced, cruelty-free, and natural products since its inception (The Body Shop, 2023).

The Body Shop's commitment to social and environmental causes extends beyond its product offerings. The company actively educates its consumers on the importance of sustainability and environmental stewardship through public relations (PR) campaigns (The Body Shop, n.d.). Over the years, these campaigns have addressed critical issues. For instance, the 1986 "Save the Whales" campaign highlighted the dangers whales face from human activity, while the 1987 "Trade Not Aid" campaign promoted fair trade practices. The Body Shop's renowned "Forever Against Animal Testing" initiative, which began in 1989, successfully garnered over 8.3 million petitions advocating for the cessation of animal testing by 2018 (Dolnicar, 2021).

The company has also emphasized environmental sustainability through campaigns like "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle." (Riyanto, 2023) The Body Shop Indonesia's ongoing "Bring Back Our Bottles" program encourages customers to return empty product packaging for recycling (Margaretha & Toni, 2020). In addition to environmental advocacy, The Body Shop launched The Body Shop Foundation in 1990 to support humanitarian projects (The Body Shop, n.d.).

One of the company's recent global PR campaigns, "Be Seen Be Heard," highlights its dedication to social issues (One Young World, 2022). This initiative aims to amplify youth voices in critical decision-making processes in collaboration with the United Nations. Despite their significant demographic presence, the campaign addresses the underrepresentation of young people in global political leadership. Data from The Body Shop International (2022) reveals that nearly 50% of the worldwide population is under 30. Yet, only 2.6% of parliament members belong to this age group, with the average global political leader being 62 years old. These findings align with United Nations data, which show that in 2021, the median global age was 30, and 16% of the population (1.2 billion people) fell within the 15–24 age range, categorized as youth (United Nations, 2022a; Our World in Data, 2022).

Building on the significant potential of youth engagement, The Body Shop, in collaboration with the United Nations, launched the "Be Seen Be Heard" campaign to amplify young voices in decision-making processes. According to Jayathma Wickramanayake, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the existing gap in power, influence, and trust represents one of the most significant challenges today, with the lack of youth participation further exacerbating public distrust in governance (United Nations, 2022b).

This perspective is supported by Policy Brief No. 149 from UN DESA (2023), which highlights that many current government policies have long-term impacts on younger generations. It emphasizes that with their innovative ideas and capabilities, young people can become leaders and game changers in policymaking, provided they can participate. Recognizing this, The Body Shop and the United Nations view the "Be Seen Be Heard" campaign as a chance to address this imbalance. Notably, previous campaigns, such as "Stop Sex Trafficking of Young People," successfully influenced legislative changes in 24 countries. A similar outcome is anticipated for "Be Seen Be Heard" (United Nations, 2022b).

Globally launched in May 2022, the campaign now spans 75 countries across six continents, with its name symbolizing the goal of ensuring that youth voices are both seen and heard (United Nations, 2022b). In Indonesia, the campaign centers on climate crisis awareness, leveraging data from The Body Shop Global Youth Survey, which reveals that while Indonesian youth rank the climate crisis as their top concern, only 5% actively voice their opinions. Although 50% use social media to discuss environmental issues, only 23% engage in dialogue with individuals holding opposing views (The Body Shop, 2022).

The Body Shop Indonesia spearheaded the campaign's localized efforts, identifying the disconnect between the growing youth population and their limited opportunities to express opinions. According to Ratu Ommaya, Head of Values, Community & PR at The Body Shop Indonesia, the campaign will unfold in three stages. The first phase focuses on raising public awareness and education. Once achieved, the campaign aims to identify "climate champions"—youth leaders capable of solving the climate crisis. Proceeds from fundraising efforts will support initiatives such as planting 14,000 mangrove trees (Khaerunnisa, 2022; The Body Shop, 2022).

To further engage Indonesian youth, The Body Shop enlisted Iqbaal Ramadhan, a prominent public figure, as the campaign's face. The campaign's reception in Indonesia has been overwhelmingly positive, with plans for a second phase scheduled for October 2023. This phase seeks to advocate for government regulations, such as integrating climate crisis education into school curricula nationwide (Khaerunnisa, 2022; Riani, 2022).

The Body Shop's commitment to environmental and social sustainability has long defined its beauty and skincare industry identity. Its PR campaigns consistently integrate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles, addressing issues aligned with the 3Ps—People, Planet, and Product. This approach resonates with the growing consumer awareness of sustainability. According to a 2022 Populix survey, 42% of respondents reported being highly familiar with environmental issues, and 55% claimed moderate awareness. Notably, 53% of respondents stated that a company's CSR initiatives addressing environmental concerns influence their consumption decisions (Populix, 2022).

Consumers' growing awareness of environmental issues shapes purchasing decisions, particularly in the beauty and skincare industry. A 2022 Populix survey revealed that global warming (27%), pollution (26%), and waste management (17%) are the top environmental concerns among respondents. Additionally, 19% of respondents identified The Body Shop as a notable company actively addressing environmental issues, with Unilever leading at 42% (Populix, 2022).

This heightened environmental awareness has fueled demand for eco-friendly skincare and body care products, as highlighted in Kompas: The "clean beauty" trend—emphasizing sustainability, cruelty-free practices, and environmental responsibility—has become a key driver of consumer choices (Jatmika & Respati, 2021). Similarly, The

Jakarta Post (2022) discusses the emergence of "green consumers" in Indonesia, who prioritize purchasing products from companies with sustainable values.

The rising prominence of sustainability has prompted many beauty companies to incorporate environmentally conscious practices into their business strategies, intensifying competition within this segment. In Indonesia, several local brands, such as Osea Laboratories, Mineral Botanica, N'PURE, and Scarlett Whitening, have embraced sustainability as a marketing tagline and through actionable campaigns. For instance, Osea Laboratories runs a "SayangiDiriSayangiBumi" campaign (Care for Yourself, Care for the Earth), promoting environmental conservation alongside cruelty-free product lines.

Table 1: Selling Price Comparison of Skincare Product with Sustainable Marketing Concept

Product	Company				
	The Body Shop	Osea Laboratories	Mineral Botanica	N'PURE	Scarlett Whitening
Moisturizer	Rp. 349,000	Rp. 175,000	Rp. 185,000	Rp. 100,000	Rp. 75,000
Toner	Rp. 249,000	Rp. 199,000	Rp. 30,000	Rp. 100,000	Rp. 75,000
Serum	Rp. 239,000	Rp. 120,000	Rp. 125,000	Rp. 100,000	Rp. 75,000

Source: Collected Data from Author (2023).

However, this competitive landscape poses challenges for The Body Shop. Despite its strong reputation as a sustainability pioneer, The Body Shop's product pricing is relatively higher than its competitors. For example, its moisturizer is priced at IDR 349,000, compared to IDR 175,000 from Osea Laboratories and IDR 75,000 from Scarlett Whitening. Similar disparities exist across product categories, including toners and serums.

Building upon the context outlined above, the question arises: Is there a relationship between The Body Shop's PR campaign, "Be Seen Be Heard," and the loyalty of young adult consumers in Medan?

This inquiry stems from the intersection of two significant trends. On one hand, there is a rising expectation for companies to align with values of environmental and social responsibility, which heavily influence consumer preferences. On the other hand, campaigns like "Be Seen Be Heard" reflect efforts by companies to not only address such societal demands but also connect with younger generations through meaningful advocacy.

Given the competitive pressures within the sustainable beauty market, understanding the impact of such campaigns on consumer loyalty becomes essential. Young adults, a demographic with increasing purchasing power and heightened environmental awareness, represent a critical audience for companies like The Body Shop. Therefore, analyzing how PR campaigns resonate with this segment can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of value-driven marketing in fostering long-term brand loyalty.

This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the correlation between the "Be Seen Be Heard" campaign and the loyalty of young adult consumers in Medan. By

examining this relationship, the research aims to understand better how socially conscious PR strategies influence consumer behavior in emerging markets.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

From the review of existing literature, it becomes evident that public relations (PR) campaigns and corporate initiatives addressing social and environmental issues significantly influence consumer loyalty. For instance, Amalia and Febiola *et al* demonstrated a positive and significant correlation between PR campaigns and customer loyalty (Amalia, 2021; Febiola & Tamburian, 2021). Their findings suggest that effective campaign messaging and execution contribute to increased customer retention and brand allegiance, with R-square values of 39.5% and 70%, respectively, indicating a strong impact.

Further, research on PR (Febiola & Tamburian, 2021) and (Aditi et al., 2022) emphasized the role of PR efficiency and information dissemination in shaping customer perceptions and loyalty. These studies highlight the need for well-structured PR activities to ensure the equitable spread of campaign information, which drives consumer trust and brand commitment.

The evidence presents a more nuanced picture when analyzing campaigns with embedded corporate social responsibility (CSR) and green marketing elements. The Body Shop's PR campaigns, characterized by their focus on social and environmental issues, align closely with findings by Moiescu and Gică (2020), who noted generational differences in loyalty drivers (Moiescu & Gică, 2020). For Generation X, social responsibility initiatives have a stronger influence, whereas Generation Y prioritizes environmental actions.

In contrast, Wong, Law, and Wu (2023) offered a divergent perspective, suggesting that green marketing, including a company's green corporate image, does not directly influence customer loyalty (Wong et al., 2023). This finding challenges the prevailing assumption that eco-friendly branding universally resonates with consumers, underscoring the need for targeted messaging based on audience-specific values.

Harold Lasswell Theory

Harold Lasswell's communication theory is widely regarded as a foundational model for understanding the dynamics of message delivery and its impact on audiences. This theory, succinctly articulated through the questions "Who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect?" provides a systematic approach to dissecting the key components of communication. In the context of public relations, this model offers a structured framework to evaluate not only the content of a campaign but also its strategic execution and audience reception.

By focusing on these elements, Lasswell's theory enables researchers to identify critical factors that drive the effectiveness of communication efforts, such as message clarity, audience relevance, and the appropriateness of communication channels. This makes it particularly useful in analyzing campaigns aimed at fostering consumer

engagement and loyalty, where precise messaging and alignment with audience values are crucial.

The decision to employ Lasswell's model in this study stems from its ability to holistically capture the interplay between message delivery and its outcomes, aligning well with the objectives of examining the relationship between PR campaigns and consumer loyalty. The model's emphasis on the "effect" serves as a critical aspect, highlighting the campaign's ability to inspire behavioral changes, such as repeat purchases or brand advocacy.

Furthermore, the inclusion of components like the communicator ("who") and the target audience ("to whom") ensures that the analysis accounts for the strategic alignment between the sender's objectives and the audience's expectations. In the case of The Body Shop's "Be Seen Be Heard" campaign, Lasswell's framework is particularly apt as it allows for an in-depth exploration of how the brand's sustainability-driven message resonates with socially and environmentally conscious young consumers, ultimately influencing their loyalty to the brand.

Public Relations

Public relations plays a crucial role in shaping an organization's reputation, extending beyond media relations and publicity to encompass strategic activities such as publications, events, community involvement, lobbying, and social responsibility, as outlined in the PENCILS framework by Harris and Wellen (Soleha et al., 2023). While sales focus on driving transactions and marketing emphasizes strategies to attract customers, public relations serves as the bridge to build a positive image and establish a brand as top-of-mind in the public's perception.

Through Harold Lasswell's communication framework—"Who says What in Which channel to Whom with What effect"—public relations activities can be systematically analyzed to understand how strategic messaging influences trust and engagement. This theoretical approach, when applied to campaigns like The Body Shop's "Be Seen Be Heard," provides a structured lens for dissecting key elements, aligning public relations practices with established communication theories, and offering insights into their impact on public perception.

The "Who" in this context identifies The Body Shop as the communicator, a global brand renowned for its commitment to sustainability and ethical practices. By leveraging its established reputation and alignment with environmental values, the company positions itself as a credible and authoritative voice in advocating for climate action and youth participation. This credibility is instrumental in gaining the trust of young consumers, a demographic increasingly drawn to brands that reflect their values and aspirations.

The "What" refers to the core message of the campaign, which emphasizes the importance of youth involvement in decision-making processes and highlights the urgency of climate action. This message resonates with the values of young adults who are often vocal advocates for environmental and social justice. The campaign's framing

of these issues as collective responsibilities aligns with broader societal movements, thereby increasing its relatability and emotional impact.

The “Which channel” dimension underscores the strategic use of multiple platforms to disseminate the campaign’s message. Digital media, including social platforms, serves as a primary vehicle, enabling widespread reach and engagement. Additionally, partnerships with influential figures, such as Iqbaal Ramadhan, enhance the campaign’s visibility and credibility (Aisya & Febriana, 2023). The integration of direct community engagement further reinforces the brand’s authenticity, creating a holistic communication approach that ensures the message resonates across different audience segments.

The “to Whom” aspect focuses on young consumers as the primary target audience. This demographic is characterized by its heightened awareness of environmental and social justice issues, as well as its preference for brands that embody authenticity and purpose. The campaign’s alignment with these values ensures its relevance and appeal, fostering a sense of connection and shared identity between the brand and its audience.

Finally, the “What effect” dimension addresses the campaign’s ultimate goal: fostering consumer loyalty and advocacy for The Body Shop’s brand. By crafting a message that resonates emotionally and aligns with the audience’s values, the campaign aims to cultivate long-term relationships with its consumers. Lasswell’s framework thus provides a comprehensive perspective on the strategic design and potential impact of The Body Shop’s public relations efforts, paving the way for a deeper exploration of its effectiveness in the subsequent sections

Consumer Loyalty

Previous studies on PR and consumer loyalty further substantiate the relevance of Lasswell's theory in this context. For instance, Amalia (2021) and Febiola & Tamburian (2021) demonstrated that well-executed PR campaigns significantly influence consumer behavior by fostering emotional connections and trust—key elements of the “effect” aspect in Lasswell’s model, ultimately leading to heightened consumer loyalty. Similarly, quantitative research has shown that marketing efforts involving influencers—focusing on attributes like expertise, trustworthiness, similarity, familiarity, and likeability—have a significant impact. At the same time, product-matchup effects on purchase intention were found to be insignificant (Afifah, 2022). Additionally, marketing promotions have been shown to influence purchase decisions (Sutjiadi & Prasetya, 2024). However, research exploring the direct relationship between PR messaging and consumer loyalty remains limited, making this study an essential step in addressing that gap.

Hypothesis

Building on the theories and prior research reviewed earlier, the hypotheses for this study are designed to investigate the potential influence of The Body Shop's PR campaign “Be Seen Be Heard” on young adult consumer loyalty in Medan. The

hypotheses reflect a deductive approach grounded in Harold Lasswell's communication model and existing evidence of the efficacy of PR campaigns in fostering consumer engagement and loyalty.

The null hypothesis (H0) posits that the "Be Seen Be Heard" campaign does not influence consumer loyalty among young adults in Medan. This assumption challenges the effectiveness of the campaign's message, channels, and overall strategy, suggesting that other factors, such as price sensitivity, market competition, or consumer skepticism, might play a more significant role in determining loyalty.

Conversely, the alternative hypothesis (H1) proposes that the campaign positively and significantly affects consumer loyalty. This aligns with the theoretical understanding that well-designed public relations initiatives can enhance emotional connection, trust, and alignment with brand values. The campaign's focus on youth empowerment and climate action resonates with contemporary consumer expectations, especially among younger demographics increasingly driven by social and environmental consciousness.

The duality of these hypotheses provides a balanced framework for analysis, allowing the study to validate or refute the assumed relationship between PR campaigns and consumer loyalty. Testing these hypotheses will contribute to a deeper understanding of how targeted campaigns addressing societal issues, such as "Be Seen Be Heard," can influence consumer behavior in the beauty and personal care industry.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology of this study was meticulously designed to ensure the clarity and reliability of the analysis, aligning with its primary objective: to examine the causal relationship between The Body Shop's PR campaign "Be Seen Be Heard" and young adult consumer loyalty in Medan. This explanatory quantitative research method provides a robust framework to identify, measure, and analyze the effects of the independent variable (the PR campaign) on the dependent variable (consumer loyalty) (Febiola & Tamburian, 2021).

Data was collected systematically, employing primary and secondary sources to ensure comprehensiveness and accuracy. Primary data was gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents meeting specific criteria, such as being 17–30 years old, residing in Medan, having an interest in body care products, and being familiar with the "Be Seen Be Heard" campaign. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale to quantify responses and address the study's hypotheses. Secondary data was obtained from scholarly articles, books, and other reliable sources to contextualize the findings within existing literature.

The population for this study includes individuals aged 17-30 years residing in Medan, with a specific interest in personal care products and familiarity with The Body Shop's "Be Seen Be Heard" campaign. The criteria for the population are:

1. Aged between 17-30 years to align with the campaign's target demographic.
2. Residing in Medan to focus the study within a defined geographical scope.

3. Interested in body care products aligning with The Body Shop's market segment.
4. Aware of the campaign, ensuring responses are relevant to the research focus.

The sample size was determined using Lemeshow's formula to ensure representativeness, yielding 100 respondents. This number balances precision and feasibility, adequately representing the target population while allowing for manageable data collection and analysis.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research instruments, the study applied rigorous testing methods:

1. Validity Test: Items were tested using the Corrected-Item Total Correlation method to confirm that each questionnaire item effectively measures the intended variable. Items were deemed valid if their calculated correlation values exceeded the table value.
2. Reliability Test: Cronbach's Alpha was used to determine the questionnaire's internal consistency. A value exceeding 0.60 indicates that the instrument is reliable and consistent for data collection.

The collected data were analyzed through a series of statistical tests, including:

1. Normality Test: This test determined whether the data distribution met the assumptions of normality, which is a prerequisite for regression analysis.
2. Correlation Analysis: Correlation coefficients were calculated to measure the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.
3. Determinant Coefficient Analysis: The proportion of variance in consumer loyalty explained by the PR campaign was quantified.
4. Simple Linear Regression Analysis: The influence of the PR campaign on consumer loyalty was assessed using a simple linear regression model. Key tests within this model included:
 - a. R Test (Correlation Coefficient Test): To evaluate the strength of the relationship.
 - b. F Test: To test the overall significance of the regression model.
 - c. T Test: To assess the individual impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

The operationalization of the variables ensures clarity in measurement:

1. Independent Variable: PR Campaign "Be Seen Be Heard" (X). Indicators include message content, structure, and audience response. These were measured using items that capture the campaign's perceived positivity, simplicity, relevance, and motivational impact.
2. Dependent Variable: Consumer Loyalty (Y). Indicators include repeat purchase behavior, retention, and referrals. Loyalty was assessed by measuring customers' intent to repurchase, resistance to competitors, and advocacy for The Body Shop products.
3. Research Location and time frame. The research was conducted in Medan, Indonesia, between March and August 2023. The location was chosen based on

the research focus and accessibility for data collection, ensuring contextual relevance to the population and campaign under study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The “Be Seen Be Heard” campaign highlights The Body Shop’s commitment to empowering young people to voice their opinions on critical environmental and social issues. By collaborating with third-party organizations such as Teens Go Green and Carbon Ethics, this initiative reflects a global call for youth inclusion. It adapts to regional contexts, addressing climate crisis concerns in Indonesia. The campaign's focus aligns with the belief that young people possess the capability and the right to influence decision-making processes that shape their future.

Launched globally in May 2022, the campaign’s Indonesian adaptation has taken steps to engage young participants through virtual and physical activities. Examples include the Sustainable Quiz, designed to assess individuals’ current lifestyle sustainability, and environmental efforts such as mangrove planting, the Bootcamp Green Leader Academy, and the Green Leader Scholarship program. These initiatives aim to educate, inspire, and involve the youth in tangible solutions to pressing environmental issues.

However, the implementation strategy reveals specific disparities. While in-person activities have been concentrated in Java, participants from other regions, such as Sumatra, Kalimantan, or Eastern Indonesia, primarily engage through online platforms. This geographical limitation may inadvertently reduce the campaign's inclusivity and diminish its perceived impact among participants outside Java. The gap between the campaign’s global intent and its localized execution emphasizes the challenge of ensuring equal opportunities for all participants, regardless of their location.

Analysis of Results

This section provides a detailed analysis of the respondents’ profiles and the survey data collected. The demographic information, including gender, age, occupation, and shopping preferences, is thoroughly examined to contextualize the findings. The study aims to validate the data's credibility and relevance by analyzing these factors, ensuring that the insights drawn represent the target audience. Such profiling is essential for interpreting consumer behavior and perceptions surrounding The Body Shop's PR campaign, "Be Seen Be Heard."

Moreover, the data analysis highlights key patterns and trends directly related to the hypotheses under investigation. These insights offer a nuanced understanding of how the campaign resonates with different demographic groups and their purchasing behaviors. This foundational data serves as the basis for broader discussions and supports either the affirmation or refutation of the proposed arguments regarding the effectiveness of The Body Shop's campaign.

Respondent Profile

The survey included 100 respondents, representing a diverse demographic in Medan. The respondents' gender distribution reveals a notable dominance of females, with 68 respondents identifying as female (68%) and 32 as male (32%). This suggests that The Body Shop's customer base in Medan is predominantly female, which may reflect the brand's alignment with products catering to women's skincare and body care needs.

Regarding age, most respondents were 25 to 30, with 59 respondents (59%) in this age bracket, followed by 41 respondents (41%) aged between 17 and 24. This suggests that The Body Shop attracts a relatively young demographic, likely due to its marketing strategies and product offerings tailored to a younger, more socially conscious audience.

The occupation data further supports this demographic profile. The largest group of respondents (44%) identified as private-sector employees, followed by 27% who were university students. This indicates that the brand is appealing to young professionals and students, who may have a moderate level of disposable income and a growing interest in skincare products.

All respondents in this study were residents of Medan, which is essential for understanding the geographical focus of the survey. Additionally, 100% of the respondents expressed interest in body and skin care products, further validating the study's relevance in measuring consumer attitudes toward these types of products.

Interaction with The Body Shop

The data also reveals that all respondents are existing customers of The Body Shop and are familiar with the PR campaign "Be Seen Be Heard." The overwhelming response from 72% of respondents indicating they first heard about the brand through social media highlights the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in reaching a broad audience.

A notable finding is the length respondents have been customers of The Body Shop, with 57% being customers for less than three years. This indicates that The Body Shop has attracted new customers, possibly through ongoing campaigns or product innovations. Furthermore, 64% of respondents stated that the COVID-19 pandemic had influenced their purchasing preferences, suggesting a shift in consumer behavior towards more health-conscious or essential products during the pandemic.

Validity and Reliability Tests

The validity test, as indicated by the calculation of r -hitung and r -tabel, confirms that all the items in the questionnaire are valid, as all the r -hitung values exceeded the threshold of 0.3610. This enhances the credibility of the survey results.

The reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha showed values well above the acceptable threshold of 0.70 for both the PR campaign and customer loyalty variables.

With Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.951 for the PR campaign and 0.887 for consumer loyalty, the survey instrument is reliable, and the data can be confidently used for further analysis.

Response to PR Campaign

The analysis of the respondents' feedback on The Body Shop's "Be Seen Be Heard" campaign demonstrates a highly positive reception among the target audience. Most respondents acknowledged the campaign's positive message, with 49% agreeing and 38% strongly agreeing that it was impactful and resonating with their values. Additionally, 45% agreed, and 42% strongly agreed that the campaign effectively reflected The Body Shop's commitment to addressing environmental concerns. These findings highlight the campaign's success in aligning its messaging with the company's brand values and the audience's expectations.

The responses regarding the message's clarity and memorability further validate the campaign's effectiveness. A notable proportion of respondents found the campaign's message compelling, with 36% agreeing and 33% strongly agreeing that it was easy to recall. This indicates that the campaign effectively employed communication strategies that engaged the audience and ensured that the message left a lasting impression. Such recall ability is a critical indicator of a campaign's success, suggesting the audience internalizes the key messages.

Furthermore, respondents strongly recognized the campaign's relevance to contemporary environmental issues. Approximately 40% agreed, and 26% strongly agreed that the campaign successfully connected its message to Indonesia's environmental concerns. This alignment with pressing local issues likely enhanced the campaign's relatability and authenticity, positioning The Body Shop as a socially responsible brand. The positive response underscores the importance of tailoring PR campaigns to address global issues while maintaining local relevance to foster deeper connections with the audience.

Consumer Loyalty Variable (Y)

This study's loyalty variable (Y) is represented by consumer loyalty, measured through three dimensions: Repurchase, Retention, and Referrals, each consisting of multiple items. The following sections analyze the responses to each dimension to evaluate consumer loyalty for The Body Shop products in Medan.

Repurchase Dimension

"I am interested in purchasing The Body Shop products long after seeing the 'Be Seen Be Heard' campaign" (Y1).

The data shows that 71% of respondents agreed (39% agree, 32% strongly agree), while 6% disagreed (3% strongly disagree, 3% disagree). 23% were neutral. These findings suggest that most The Body Shop consumers in Medan are inclined to continue purchasing the brand's products long-term after being exposed to the campaign.

“The Body Shop campaigns addressing environmental and social issues encourage me to repurchase their products” (Y2).

A total of 87% of respondents agreed (51% agree, 36% strongly agree), while 13% expressed neutrality or disagreement (9% neutral, 4% disagree). This emphasizes the effectiveness of the brand’s socially conscious campaigns in fostering consumer repurchase intentions.

Retention Dimension

“I reject offers from other skincare and body care companies” (Y3).

The results indicate that 76% of respondents agreed (48% agree, 28% strongly agree), while 24% were neutral or disagreed. These findings demonstrate significant consumer loyalty, with a strong inclination to remain loyal to The Body Shop.

“Promotions from other skincare and body care companies do not influence me” (Y4).

77% of respondents (43% agree, 34% strongly agree) resisted the influence of competitors' promotions, while 23% were neutral or disagreed. This underscores the brand’s ability to establish retention through its compelling campaigns.

“I am loyal to The Body Shop as a company” (Y5).

81% of respondents confirmed their loyalty (49% agree, 32% strongly agree), with only 19% expressing neutrality or disagreement. These results reinforce consumers' strong emotional connection and trust with the brand.

“I will continue to purchase The Body Shop products even if prices increase” (Y6).

87% of respondents agreed (49% agree, 38% strongly agree), while 13% expressed neutrality or disagreement. This highlights consumers’ willingness to prioritize the brand despite potential price sensitivity.

Referrals Dimension

“I recommend The Body Shop products to people close to me after seeing the 'Be Seen Be Heard' campaign” (Y7).

With 79% agreement (50% agree, 29% strongly agree), the results indicate a strong referral effect. Meanwhile, 21% remained neutral or disagreed. This demonstrates the campaign's success in generating word-of-mouth marketing.

"I say positive things about The Body Shop after seeing the 'Be Seen Be Heard' campaign" (Y8).

84% of respondents (47% agree, 37% strongly agree) expressed positive sentiments, while 16% were neutral or disagreed. This indicates a significant impact of the campaign on consumer advocacy.

"I promote or discuss the 'Be Seen Be Heard' campaign on my social media to inform others about it" (Y9).

An impressive 86% of respondents (48% agree, 38% strongly agree) indicated their active participation in promoting the campaign, with only 14% remaining neutral or disagreeing. This highlights the campaign's effectiveness in engaging consumers to become brand advocates on digital platforms.

Results of the Normality Test

The normality test results aim to determine whether the data is usually distributed. The decision criteria are based on the probability (Asymptotic Significance), as follows:

- If the probability > 0.05, the population distribution is normal.
- If the probability < 0.05, the population is not normally distributed.

Table 40: Normality Test Results One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Unstandardized Residual	
N	100
Normal Parameters	Mean: 0.0000000, Std. Deviation: 3.28663767
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute: 0.074, Positive: 0.055, Negative: -0.074
Test Statistic	0.074
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.195

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test results in the table above, the probability value is 0.195, more significant than 0.05. This indicates that the normality assumption is met, and the data is usually distributed.

Correlation Results

Correlation measures the strength of the linear relationship between two variables, which can be positive or negative. In this study, testing is conducted at a significance level of 0.05.

a. Hypotheses

- H0 = No relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables.
- H1 = There is a relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

b. Decision Criteria

- If the Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05, H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted.
- If the Sig. (2-tailed) > 0.05, H0 is accepted and H1 is rejected.

Table 41: Correlation Coefficient Values

Strength of Relationship	Value Type
0.00-0.199	Very Weak
0.20-0.399	Weak
0.40-0.599	Moderate
0.60-0.799	Strong
0.80-1.000	Very Strong

Source: Creswell & Guetterman, 2019

Table 42: Correlation Test Results

Relationship	Sig.	Correlation Coefficient
PR Campaign and Customer Loyalty	0.000	0.823

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Based on the correlation test results in the table above, the correlation coefficient between PR Campaigns and Customer Loyalty is 0.823. This indicates a positive and very strong relationship between the two variables. Moreover, the significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This leads to the rejection of H0 and acceptance of H1, confirming the existence of a relationship between PR campaigns and customer loyalty.

Determination Test Results

The determination test assesses the extent of the independent variable (X) 's influence on the dependent variable (Y) in percentage form. The coefficient of determination ranges between zero and one. A coefficient closer to 1 indicates a higher influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Table 43: Coefficient of Determination

Model	Model Summary			
	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.823	.678	.675	3.303
a. Predictors: (Constant), Kampanye PR				
b. Dependent Variable: Loyalitas KONsumen				

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

From the coefficient of determination test in the table above, the R square value is 0.678, meaning that the variation in the PR Campaign variable can explain 67.8% of

the variation in Customer Loyalty. The remaining 32.2% is influenced by other variables not investigated in this study.

Simple Linear Regression Test Results

Simple linear regression analysis measures the strength and direction of the relationship between one independent and dependent variable.

Table 44: Simple Linear Regression Results

Model		Coefficients			T	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.023	2.309		1.742	0.085
	Kampanye PR	492	0.034	0.823	14.364	0.00

a. Dependent Variable: Loyalitas Konsumen

Source: SPSS Output, 2023

Based on the simple linear regression analysis results in the table above, the regression model is as follows:

Regression Model: $Y = 4.023 + 0.492 * X$

Where:

Y = Customer Loyalty

X = PR Campaign

The regression coefficient for the PR Campaign variable is 0.492. This means that a one-point increase in the PR Campaign variable will significantly increase Customer Loyalty by 0.492.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate a significant positive relationship between PR campaigns and customer loyalty. As the value of the PR campaign increases, customer loyalty also rises. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Febiola and Tamburian (2021) and Amalia (2021), which also concluded that PR campaigns positively and significantly affect customer loyalty.

This outcome also reflects Harold Lasswell's communication theory, where Who (the company, in this case, The Body Shop) communicates What (the message of the "Be Seen Be Heard" PR campaign) through Channels (media, online quizzes, and live campaigns) to Whom (the consumers), resulting in an Effect (customer loyalty).

Additionally, this finding aligns with the objective of PR campaigns, as stated by Amalia (2021), which is to strengthen the public's attitudes and perceptions, which, in this case, is customer loyalty to The Body Shop.

Moreover, the findings validate the three indicators of customer loyalty proposed by Kotler, Philip & Keller: repeat purchases, resistance to competitors, and customer referrals (Wahyono & Nurjanah, 2020).

From the respondents' answers to the 25 questionnaire items, although some disagreed, the majority agreed or strongly agreed. This indicates that The Body Shop's "Be Seen Be Heard" campaign has a strong positive relationship with consumer loyalty.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that The Body Shop's "Be Seen Be Heard" PR campaign has a significant and positive impact on customer loyalty, especially in Medan, North Sumatera. The Indonesian-based analysis demonstrated a very strong correlation between the PR campaign and consumer loyalty, with the results showing that 67.8% of the variation in customer loyalty can be explained by the variation in the campaign efforts. The hypothesis testing further confirmed that the relationship between PR campaigns and customer loyalty is positive and statistically significant.

While the results provide strong evidence of the influence of PR campaigns on customer loyalty, there are limitations that future research could address. For instance, future studies might consider exploring additional variables, such as brand reputation, customer satisfaction, and social media engagement, to enrich the understanding of factors influencing loyalty further. Additionally, expanding the study to other regions or industries could provide a broader perspective on the generalizability of the findings. Exploring the long-term effects of PR campaigns on consumer behavior would also be valuable in assessing the sustainability of these relationships over time.

In conclusion, PR campaigns profoundly affect customer loyalty, particularly those focusing on meaningful societal and environmental issues. Companies should continue to invest in well-executed PR strategies to strengthen customer relationships, build brand loyalty, and foster long-term consumer engagement.

BIODATA

Arifa Dani Anggit Widjaya, S.Ikom was born in Surabaya in 2001 and earned her bachelor's degree in Communication Science from LSPR Institute of Communication & Business in 2023. A Dutch national, currently living in Medan, North Sumatera, she is particularly interested in Public Relations.

Latifa Ramonita, M.IKom, is a lecturer and researcher at LSPR Institute of Communication & Business in Jakarta, Indonesia. Her academic and practical expertise spans in communication science, media, cross-cultural communication, and gender studies. She can be reached at ramonita.b@lspr.edu.

REFERENCES

- Aditi, B., Nabella, S. D., Djakasaputra, A., Haryani, D. S., & Nasib. (2022). The Trigger For Falling Loyalty Originating from Public Relations and Customer Values and Satisfaction. *International Journal Of Artificial Intelligence Research*, 6(1), 2022. <https://doi.org/10.29099/ijair.v6i1.1.466>
- Afifah, I. F. (2022). Expertise, Trustworthiness, Similarity, Familiarity, Likeability, Product Match-up of Celebrity Endorsement to Purchase Intention. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 1(2), 21. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105001220223>
- Aisya, S., & Febriana, P. (2023). Strategi Komunikasi Pemasaran The Body Shop melalui Brand Ambassador: Studi Kasus Iqbaal Ramadhan. *Satwika : Kajian Ilmu Budaya Dan Perubahan Sosial*, 7(1), 200–208. <https://doi.org/10.22219/satwika.v7i1.25348>
- Amalia, R. (2021). Pengaruh Kampanye Public Relations No Straw Movement Terhadap Loyalitas Pengunjung Kona Koffie. *Inter Script: Journal of Creative Communication*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.33376/is.v2i1.547>
- Dolnicar, S. (Ed.). (2021). *Airbnb Before, During and After COVID-19*. University of Queensland, DOI: 10.14264/ab59afd
- Febiola, V., & Tamburian, D. (2021). The Effect of Digital Public Relations Campaign on Customer Loyalty (Study on “Self-Love” Campaign in @Pluffyschoice Instagram). *Proceedings of the International Conference on Economics, Business, Social, and Humanities (ICEBSH 2021)*, 570(Icebsh), 789–794. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210805.124>
- Jatmika, A., & Respati, S. (2021). *Semakin Diminati, Yuk Kenali Tren “Clean Beauty.”* Kompas.Com. <https://lifestyle.kompas.com/read/2021/02/27/080100220/semakin-diminati-yuk-kenali-tren-clean-beauty>
- Karliadi, A., & Erawari, D. (2023). The Influence of Communication and Problem Handling Customer Satisfaction in Using Call Center Services (Study on Conventional Banks in the City of Palangka Raya). *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen dan Bisnis*, 6(2), 536-544. <https://ejurnal.ung.ac.id/index.php/JIMB/article/download/19580/7061>
- Khaerunnisa, R. (2022). *The Body Shop Luncurkan Kampanye Perubahan Iklim “Be Seen Be Heard.”* Antara News. <https://www.antaraneews.com/berita/2909745/the-body-shopluncurkan-kampanye-perubahan-iklim-be-seen-be-heard>
- Margaretha, L., & Toni, A. (2020). CSR Program Bring Back Our Bottle The Body Shop Sebagai Aktivitas Sosial Marketing Public Relations. *Jurnal Komunikasi Universitas Garut: Hasil Pemikiran Dan Penelitian*, 6(2), 485–494. <https://doi.org/10.10358/jk.v6i2.730>
- Moiescu, O.-I., & Gică, O.-A. (2020). The Impact of Environmental and Social Responsibility on Customer Loyalty: A Multigroup Analysis among Generations X

- and Y. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(18), 6466. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17186466>
- One Young World. (2022). "Be Seen, Be Heard" Campaign. Oneyoungworld.Com. <https://www.oneyoungworld.com/event/be-seen-be-heard-campaign>
- Our World in Data. (2022). Our World in Data. Diperoleh dari <https://ourworldindata.org/>
- Populix. (2022, May 24). *Understanding Consumers' Perception Towards Environmental Sustainability and Social Responsibility*. <https://info.populix.co/en/report/understanding-consumersperception-towards-environmental-sustainability-and-socialresponsibility-2/>
- Prihandini, F., & Hadi, A. S. P. (2021). Pengaruh Marketing Public Relations terhadap Loyalitas Pelanggan. *Jurnal Riset Public Relations*, 1(1), 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.29313/jrpr.v1i1.114>
- Rahmawan, A. Z., & Efendi, Z. (2022). Implementasi Society 5.0 Dalam Kebijakan Dan Strategi Pendidikan Pada Pandemi Covid-19. *STRATEGY : Jurnal Inovasi Strategi Dan Model Pembelajaran*, 2(1), 34–43. <https://doi.org/10.51878/strategi.v2i1.861>
- Riani, A. (2022). *Iqbaal Ramadhan Pilih Pakai Baju Bekas demi Minimalkan Dampak Perubahan Iklim*. Liputan6.Com. <https://www.liputan6.com/lifestyle/read/4974698/iqbaal-ramadhan-pilih-pakai-baju-bekas-demi-minimalkan-dampak-perubahan-iklim>
- Riyanto, S. B. (2023). *The Body Shop, Gerai Kecantikan Berkonsep Ramah Lingkungan*. RRI.co.id. <https://www.rri.co.id/jawa-tengah/hobi/196604/the-body-shop-gerai-kecantikan-berkonsep-ramah-lingkungan>
- Soleha, S., Utomo, A. G., & Herari, N. (2023). Identifying key service and quality dimensions as public relations strategy in RSUP Persahabatan. *Jurnal Ilmiah LISKI (Lingkar Studi Komunikasi)*, 9(2), 64. <https://doi.org/10.25124/liski.v9i2.6098>
- Sutjiadi, I., & Prasetya, W. (2021). Effect of Instagram Promotion towards Buying Intention and Buying Decision of Pekopurin.id. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 1(1), 5. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105001120212>
- The Body Shop. (2022). Lead The Fight To Change The Future Be Seen Be Heard. Thebodyshop.Co.Id. <https://www.thebodyshop.co.id/blog/lead-the-fight-to-change-thefuture-be-seen-be-heard>
- The Body Shop. (2023). The Body Shop. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/TheBodyShopIndonesia/>
- The Body Shop Indonesia. (2020). Bring Back Our Bottles. <https://www.thebodyshop.co.id/bbob>
- The Body Shop Indonesia. (2023). Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/thebodyshopindo.impact/> 102
- The Jakarta Post. (2022, May 10). Growing value of green consumers in Indonesia. The Jakarta Post. <https://www.thejakartapost.com/paper/2022/05/09/growing-valueof-green-consumers-in-indonesia.html>

- UN DESA *Policy Brief No. 149: Promoting Youth Participation in Decision-Making and Public Service Delivery through Harnessing Digital Technologies*. (2023). Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desapolicy-brief-no-149-promoting-youth-participation-in-decisionmaking-and-public-service-delivery-through-harnessing-digitaltechnologies/> 103
- United Nations. (2022a). *World Population Prospects - Population Division - United Nations*. Retrieved from <https://population.un.org/wpp/Download/>
- United Nations. (2022b, May). *Launch of “Be Seen, Be Heard” Campaign – Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2022/05/launch-ofthe-be-seen-be-heard-campaign/>
- Wahyono, W., & Nurjanah, U. (2020). Building Customer Loyalty through Strategy Experiential Marketing, Service Quality, and Customer Satisfaction. *Management Analysis Journal*, 9(2), 122-131. <https://doi.org/10.15294/maj.v9i2.39109>
- Wong, C. B., Law, M., & Wu, W. C. B. (2023). Determinants of Customer Loyalty: A Green Marketing Perspective. *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on Business, Accounting, Finance and Economics (BAFE 2022)*, 2050, 447–462. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-99-2_33

Benin Publics' Perception of Media Framing of Gender Equality for National Development in Nigeria

Emeke Precious Nwaoboli¹, Adédèjì Fred Aríjeníwà²

¹Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Nigeria

²Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Nigeria

Submitted: September 2024, **Revised:** November 2024, **Accepted:** December 2024

ABSTRACT

This study examines the Benin public's perceptions of media framing gender equality in Nigeria and its impact on national development. The study's rationale was to ascertain how media framing practices shape public attitudes and influence policy responses, ultimately affecting the overall advancement of gender equality in Nigeria. Anchored on framing theory, the study employed the survey research design and collected data using a structured questionnaire from 384 respondents in Benin City using the multistage sampling technique. The data were presented in tables and analyzed using frequency counts, straightforward percentages, and mean scores. Findings revealed that the media create awareness of gender equality among the Benin public to a great extent, with social media identified as the most effective platform. Also, the standard frames employed by the media on gender equality issues are social justice and political empowerment frames. However, despite recognizing the media's effectiveness, concerns about bias and fairness persist. The researchers conclude that while media plays a significant role in raising awareness, there is considerable skepticism regarding the accuracy and bias of these portrayals. Recommendations include efforts that should be made to increase the frequency and consistency of gender equality content across all media platforms, including traditional and digital media, among others.

Keywords: *bias and fairness, gender advocacy, media influence, media representation, social media.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is a critical global issue shaping societal development (Kiram, 2024). Central to addressing discrimination and inequality, it is a key focus of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5, which aims to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (United Nations, 2021). This goal highlights eliminating discrimination and violence, ensuring equal decision-making participation, and providing equitable access to education and healthcare. However, despite global efforts, significant gender disparities persist, underscoring the challenges of achieving true equality worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2023).

In the context of Nigeria, gender equality remains a pressing issue, reflecting broader global challenges while also highlighting specific national barriers. Nigerian women face a range of socio-economic and cultural obstacles that hinder their progress and opportunities (Endong & Obonganwan, 2015; Guanah, 2023; Akinlami, 2024). Educational attainment, for instance, varies significantly between genders, with cultural norms and economic constraints often limiting girls' access to education (UNICEF, 2022).

Furthermore, Nigerian women frequently encounter systemic gender biases in the workforce, where traditional roles and expectations can restrict their career advancement and economic independence (World Bank, 2022). Gender-based violence and discrimination (GBV/D) are also prevalent, exacerbating the difficulties women face in achieving equality and personal safety.

However, the role of media in shaping public perceptions of gender equality cannot be overstated. Media outlets, including television, radio, print, and digital platforms, are instrumental in framing public discussions and attitudes towards gender issues (Ahmed, 2025). Media representations can either reinforce stereotypical gender norms or challenge and redefine them by highlighting issues of inequality and advocating for change (Khan & Tidman, 2023; Santoniccolo, Trombetta, Paradiso & Rollè, 2023).

In Nigeria, media coverage of gender issues has evolved, with increasing attention given to topics such as gender-based violence (GBV), women's rights, and gender representation in politics and business (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Adewunmi & Aleshinloye, 2024). However, the impact of media is complex and multifaceted, as it can sometimes perpetuate existing stereotypes or biases while also serving as a platform for advocacy and reform.

Furthermore, the importance of gender equality extends beyond the realm of social justice and has significant implications for national development. Evidence consistently shows that gender equality contributes positively to economic growth and societal well-being (Calvino, et al., 2024). For instance, empowering women and ensuring their full participation in the economy can lead to increased productivity, innovation, and overall economic prosperity (Sudha & Reshi, 2023).

In Nigeria, addressing gender disparities can unlock the potential of a significant portion of the population, leading to improved economic outcomes and greater social cohesion (Fab-Ukozor, 2019; Ihechu & Nwabuisi, 2021; Ihechu, Afulike & Ndukwe, 2023). Gender equality can also enhance educational achievements and health outcomes, creating a more equitable and sustainable development trajectory for the nation (Kattan, et al., 2023). Therefore, the intersection of gender equality and national development underscores the need for comprehensive strategies that address both the systemic barriers faced by women and the role of media in shaping public discourse.

Meanwhile, media framing significantly influences public perception of gender equality, shaping societal attitudes and policy responses. This is because media plays a crucial role in framing gender issues, often highlighting or downplaying specific aspects to create a particular narrative (Hedegaard, 2020). For instance, studies reveal that

Nigerian media frequently portrays gender equality issues through a lens that emphasises cultural and traditional constraints, which may perpetuate gender stereotypes rather than challenging them (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018; Fab-Ukozor, 2019; Ndinojuo, 2020; Ihechu, Afulike, & Ndukwe, 2023; Akinlami, 2024). This framing can reinforce existing biases and limit the public's understanding of gender equality as a dynamic and evolving issue, rather than a fixed cultural norm.

Also, the portrayal of gender issues in Nigerian media often reflects broader societal attitudes and can influence policy making. Ihechu Afulike & Ndukwe (2023) indicate that media representations that frame gender equality primarily as a women's issue, rather than a societal one, can marginalize the role of men in addressing gender disparities. This narrow framing may undermine efforts towards comprehensive gender equality by not engaging all societal actors in the dialogue.

Furthermore, the framing of gender equality in Nigerian media can impact public perception and the ultimate effectiveness of gender policies. Media narratives that emphasize sensational or conflict-oriented aspects of gender issues, rather than constructive solutions, may skew public perception and hinder meaningful progress (Ogwezzy-Ndisika, Faustino, Amakoh, Adesile, Ejiwunmi & Oloruntoba, 2023). Understanding how media framing shapes public attitudes (Çerçi, 2024) and influences policy responses (Remitasari & Fenton, 2021) is crucial for advancing gender equality in Nigeria.

The primary aim of this study is to explore the role of media in shaping awareness and understanding of gender equality among the Benin public. Specifically, it seeks to assess the extent to which the media create awareness of gender equality, investigate the framing strategies employed by the media in presenting gender equality as a tool for national development, and examine public perceptions of media framing of gender equality within the Nigerian context. Through this exploration, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the media's influence on public discourse and attitudes toward gender equality.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The portrayal of gender in the media has been a critical area of concern, shaping public perceptions and influencing societal norms. Audiences often perceive media representations as reflections of reality, which can reinforce or challenge existing gender stereotypes. Studies have shown that traditional media often depict men and women in stereotypical roles, with men typically portrayed as strong, dominant, and career-oriented, while women are often shown as nurturing, emotional, and primarily concerned with family life (Faustino & Amakoh, 2018; Atar, 2020; Onwumechili, 2021; Omonua, Akpor & Olley, 2023). This pattern can have profound implications on how audiences internalize gender roles, potentially limiting the scope of what is considered acceptable behaviour for men and women.

In recent years, however, there has been a gradual shift towards more diverse and inclusive representations of gender in the media. This change has been largely

influenced by social movements advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women. For instance, the #MeToo movement brought global attention to issues of sexual harassment and gender inequality, prompting media outlets to reconsider how they portray gender issues (Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2019; Sainz-De-Baranda, Adá-Lameiras, Blanco-Ruiz, 2020; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2021). As a result, audiences have begun to see more portrayals of women in leadership roles, men in caregiving positions, and non-binary characters in mainstream media.

Despite these positive changes, audience perceptions remain complex and varied. Some segments of the audience may embrace these new portrayals as progressive and reflective of societal change. Others, however, may view them as unrealistic or threatening to traditional gender norms (Mendes, Ringrose & Keller, 2019; Aladi & Okoro, 2021; Santoniccolo, Trombetta, Paradiso & Rollè, 2023). For example, older audiences or those with more conservative views may resist media representations that challenge traditional gender roles, perceiving them as a departure from established societal values.

Moreover, the impact of media portrayals on audience perception varies significantly, influenced by factors such as age, education, cultural background, and personal experiences with gender issues (Liao, 2023). Younger, more educated audiences often view non-traditional gender portrayals as essential for social progress (Connell, 2005), while more conservative or less educated individuals may find these portrayals alienating or misaligned with their expectations, creating a disconnect between media representations and audience perceptions.

Therefore, it is clear that the portrayal of gender in the media is not just a passive reflection of societal norms but an active force in shaping public perceptions. The media has the power to challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality, but its impact is contingent on how audiences interpret and respond to these portrayals. As media continues to evolve, so too will the ways in which gender is represented and perceived by the public.

Review of Empirical Studies

Ihechu & Nwabuisi (2021) investigated how women are represented in television advertising within Abia. Their aim was to understand the portrayal of women, particularly from the perspective of Abia's audience. They utilized two main theories: reception analysis and constructivism, as the theoretical underpinnings of their research. Using a survey method with a sample of 400 individuals drawn from a population of 138,570, they collected data through questionnaires. The results revealed dissatisfaction among women regarding their depiction in television ads.

Women were predominantly featured in ads for household goods, baby products, cosmetics, and food. The study found that advertisements often reinforced stereotypes in areas like entertainment, clothing, and cosmetics, but depicted women in a less stereotypical manner in ads for tobacco, travel, food, and financial services. The researchers suggested that ads treating women merely as objects should be

discontinued, and advocated for women to challenge and resist their negative portrayal. While this study focused on media representation of women, it did not cover broader issues of gender equality, which will be explored in the current study.

Aladi & Okoro (2021) analyzed how four newspapers—Vanguard, The Punch, The Guardian, and This Day—depicted women in their coverage from January 1, 2015, to December 31, 2017. They set out with three objectives and two hypotheses, employing content analysis with a coding sheet for data collection. Research questions were addressed using simple percentages, while hypotheses were tested with a chi-square test at a 0.05 significance level. The findings indicated that coverage of women was predominantly focused on entertainment and domestic topics, with minimal attention to areas like economy, politics, education, health, and environment. The portrayal of women was mainly negative. The researchers suggested that journalists should enhance their representation of women, given that women make up 49% of Nigeria's population. This study's focus on media portrayal of women does not encompass gender equality broadly, a topic to be explored in the current study.

Ihechu, Afulike & Ndukwe (2023) explored how media in Nigeria frame cultural practices that affect women, focusing on South East Nigeria. Their study aimed to assess the frequency of media coverage, identify framing patterns, and understand the challenges faced in covering these practices. They used a survey method to collect data from 276 journalists via questionnaires, capturing their views on the difficulties encountered in reporting these cultural practices. Additionally, they employed content analysis to evaluate how often these practices were covered in selected radio, television, and newspaper outlets and to discern the framing approaches used. The study found that radio and television provided substantial coverage of these practices, whereas newspapers had a lower level of coverage. The framing patterns varied from critical to highlighting the practices' impact on societal progress and advocating for their review, amendment, or elimination. Challenges identified included a lack of supportive legislation, familial and religious ties to the practices, and the practices' sacred and secretive nature. The researchers recommended that media professionals, policymakers, NGOs, and community leaders collaborate to address these challenges to improve the coverage and analysis of cultural practices. While this study focused on media portrayal of women, it did not cover broader gender equality issues, which will be examined in the current study.

Framing Theory

Framing Theory, originally developed by Erving Goffman in his seminal work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), explores how individuals and media organizations shape perceptions of reality by emphasizing certain aspects of information while downplaying others. Goffman (1959) introduced the idea that frames are mental structures that shape the way we perceive and interpret information. This concept was later expanded by scholars like Robert Entman, who defined framing as selecting and

highlighting certain aspects of a perceived reality to promote a particular interpretation (Entman, 1993).

In media studies, the theory has been pivotal in understanding how news outlets influence public opinion. For example, studies have shown that the framing of news stories about social issues can significantly impact public attitudes and behaviour. For instance, Iyengar's (1991) research demonstrated that news frames can alter how viewers perceive the causes of social problems and the appropriate responses. This suggests that media frames not only reflect but also construct reality. The theory has also been applied to political communication, where framing can affect electoral outcomes and policy support. Political campaigns frequently use framing to highlight favourable aspects of their platforms while minimizing negative ones, thereby influencing voter perceptions (Ojebuyi & Chukwunwike, 2018). This strategic use of framing can play a crucial role in shaping political narratives and public opinion.

In recent years, the advent of digital media has transformed how framing operates. Social media platforms enable rapid dissemination of information and frames, amplifying their impact. Studies on social media framing indicate that algorithms and user interactions can further entrench certain frames, influencing public discourse on a large scale (Song, 2024). Overall, Framing Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how information is presented and perceived, with significant implications for media, politics, and society.

In the context of this study, framing theory helps explain how media narratives shape public views. Media that frame gender equality as vital for national progress can boost support and align with development goals. Conversely, frames depicting it as a threat to traditional values may lead to resistance. Social media also amplifies these frames, influencing public opinion and policy. By analyzing these frames, we can understand their impact on public attitudes and development efforts in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This research used a survey methodology and a structured questionnaire as the data collection tool. According to Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafo, and Okpanachi (2022), a survey is a type of quantitative research design that involves gathering data from a sample population through the use of structured questionnaires or surveys. This method was chosen because it efficiently collects primary quantitative data from a large population.

The study measured media awareness using a 6-item scale derived from the author's conceptualization. The media frame was assessed through specific questions in the questionnaire designed to capture participants' perceptions of media content. The study focused on the residents of Benin metropolis, which, as reported by Zhujiworld (2024), has a population of 1,968,719.

Benin City was chosen because it is a major cosmopolitan city in Nigeria and has people from diverse backgrounds and worldviews. A sample size of 384 was determined using the Survey-Monkey Sample Size calculator. The research employed a multi-stage

sampling technique. In the first stage, Benin was purposively divided into East and West sectors. In the second stage, the city was further divided into clusters based on Local Government Areas (LGAs): Egor, Oredo, Ikpoba-Okha and Ovia North-East.

In the third stage, random sampling was used to select specific areas from the previously established clusters, resulting in the selection of Siluko, Ekenwan, Ikpoba-Hill, and Ugbowo, respectively. This approach ensured a fair representation across the metropolis. In the final stage, 384 questionnaires were randomly distributed to respondents within these selected areas. The data was analyzed using simple percentages and presented in tabular form, with a response rate of 98.4% (n=374).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Frequency of encounter to media content related to gender equality

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Daily	65	17.4
Often	108	28.9
Occasionally	176	47.1
Rarely	25	6.7
Never	-	-
Total	374	100

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The data in the above table show that most respondents are occasionally exposed to media contents on gender equality. This is based on the fact that 47.1% of the respondents answered to that effect.

Table 2: Extent media coverage of gender equality issues has increased awareness and understanding of gender equality among Benin publics

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Significantly increased	46	12.3
Moderately increased	167	44.7
Slightly increased	128	34.2
Cannot say	31	8.3
No impact	2	0.5
Total	374	100

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The above data indicate that the extent to which media coverage of gender equality issues has increased awareness and understanding of gender equality among the Benin public is moderate (44.7%).

Table 3: Types of media content that has been most effective in raising awareness about gender equality among Benin publics

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Newspaper articles	27	7.2

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Television programmes	61	16.3
Radio broadcasts	87	23.3
Social media posts	182	48.7
Documentaries	11	2.9
Public service announcements	6	1.6
None of the Above	-	-
Total	374	100

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The data in the above table show that social media posts (48.7%) are the type of media content that has been most effective in raising awareness about gender equality among the Benin public, followed by radio broadcasts (23.3%) and television programs (16.3%).

Table 4: The most common frames used by the media when discussing gender equality in relation to national development

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
Economic disparity frame	46	12.3
Social justice frame	128	34.2
Political empowerment frame	93	24.9
Health and well-being frame	24	6.4
Education and skills frame	51	13.6
Culture and tradition frame	32	8.6
None of the above	-	-
Total	374	100

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The table indicates that the media predominantly employs the Social Justice Frame when discussing gender equality, making up 34.2% of the coverage. Thus, the heavy emphasis on the Social Justice Frame suggests that the media prioritises issues related to fairness and equality, potentially shaping public perception and dialogue around gender equality issues.

Table 5: Perception of Media Framing of Gender Equality for National Development among Benin Publics

Variables	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Media's portrayal of gender equality in Nigeria as presented in news reports and articles is accurate	53 (14.2)	85 (22.7)	79 (21.1)	96 (25.7)	61 (16.3)
Nigerian media are biased in its framing of gender equality issues	88 (23.5)	108 (28.9)	61 (16.3)	64 (17.1)	53 (14.2)
Nigerian media are effective in raising awareness about gender equality issues	141 (37.7)	174 (46.5)	46 (12.3)	11 (2.9)	07 (1.9)

Variables	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Media framing of gender equality in Nigeria affect public attitudes towards gender equality	125 (33.4)	168 (44.9)	59 (15.8)	13 (3.5)	09 (2.4)
Nigerian media adequately represents the challenges and successes related to gender equality	63 (16.8)	94 (25.1)	43 (11.5)	102 (27.3)	72 (19.3)
Nigerian media are fair in its representation of different genders in discussions about gender equality	81 (21.7)	101 (27)	39 (10.4)	91 (24.3)	64 (17.1)

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The data in the above table reveals that while the Nigerian media is widely recognized for effectively raising awareness about gender equality and influencing public attitudes, there are notable concerns about media bias and fairness. Many respondents feel that the portrayal of gender equality issues is not entirely accurate or adequate, and there is significant scepticism about the fairness of gender representation in media discussions.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the perception of Benin publics of gender equality for national development in Nigeria. In the course of this study, there are findings that are very significant in providing answers to the research questions in order to achieve the objectives of this study.

One research objective aimed to assess the extent to which media create awareness of gender equality among the Benin public. The data, derived from Tables 1, 2, and 3, provides insight into how frequently individuals encounter media content related to gender equality, the impact of this media coverage on their understanding, and the types of media content that are most effective. According to Table 1, a substantial portion of the Benin public encounters media content related to gender equality at varying frequencies. The majority of respondents (47.1%) encounter such content occasionally, while 28.9% do so often and 17.4% daily. This suggests that while media content related to gender equality is relatively accessible, it is not uniformly encountered every day. This distribution indicates a relatively high level of exposure to gender equality issues through media, though the frequency varies. The occasional to frequent exposure highlights the potential for media to reach a broad audience, but also underscores that for continuous impact, more consistent media engagement might be necessary. This confirms the study of Ihechu, Afulike & Ndukwe (2023) which found that the extent of media framing of gender-related issues is high.

Table 2 shows that media coverage has had a notable effect on awareness and understanding of gender equality among the Benin public. The majority of respondents (44.7%) felt that media coverage has moderately increased their awareness and

understanding, while 34.2% felt it has slightly increased. This indicates that a significant portion of the population perceives media coverage as a meaningful contributor to their understanding of gender equality. This also implies that while media coverage is beneficial, there is room for improvement in enhancing its effectiveness and reach.

Furthermore, Table 3 highlights the types of media content that have been most effective in raising awareness about gender equality. Social media posts emerged as the most influential form of media, with 48.7% of respondents identifying them as the most effective. Radio broadcasts (23.3%) and television programmes (16.3%) follow, indicating that these traditional media forms also play a significant role. The predominance of social media as the most effective medium reflects its widespread use and ability to rapidly disseminate information. This aligns with global trends where social media platforms are increasingly used for advocacy and awareness campaigns. Traditional media, while still relevant, appears to have a lesser impact compared to digital platforms in this context.

Overall, the findings suggest that media play a substantial role in raising awareness of gender equality among the Benin public. While most individuals are exposed to gender equality content with moderate to high frequency, the perceived impact on awareness is significant but varied. Social media stands out as the most effective medium for creating awareness, surpassing traditional media forms in influence. These insights underline the importance of leveraging digital platforms for gender equality advocacy while continuing to use traditional media to complement these efforts.

The research objective two aimed to identify the frames used by the media to present gender equality in relation to national development among Benin publics. The data from Table 4 reveals how various frames are employed to discuss gender equality, highlighting the media's approach to addressing this issue and its implications for national development. Social justice frame (34.2%) was found to be the most prevalent frame used by the media. It emphasizes the equitable treatment of all individuals and addresses gender equality as a fundamental human right and a matter of fairness.

This frame suggests that the media often presents gender equality as an issue of social justice, highlighting the need for equitable opportunities and rights for all genders to ensure a just society. The prominence of this frame indicates that discussions around gender equality are often anchored in the broader context of human rights and fairness, which aligns with national development goals centred on creating inclusive and equitable societies.

Also, political empowerment frame (24.9%) was another common frame that focuses on the importance of women's participation and representation in political processes. It underscores how gender equality can contribute to more balanced and effective governance. The significant presence of this frame suggests that the media acknowledges the role of political empowerment in national development, advocating for increased female political representation as a means to drive progress and ensure diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.

Furthermore, education and skills frame (13.6%) was also found to be common. This frame emphasised the role of education and skill development in achieving gender equality. This frame highlights how investing in education and skill-building for all genders contributes to national development by fostering a more capable and skilled workforce. The moderate frequency of this frame indicates recognition of the link between education, gender equality, and economic growth. More so, economic disparity frame (12.3%), culture and tradition frame (8.6%) and health and well-being frame (6.4%) were found in the course of this study. However, the relatively lower frequency of these frames suggest that while these frames are recognized, they are less emphasized compared to other aspects.

The findings reveal that the media predominantly use the social justice frame when discussing gender equality and its relation to national development. This framing aligns gender equality with broader human rights issues, emphasizing fairness and equity. The political empowerment frame also plays a significant role, reflecting an understanding of the importance of female participation in governance for national progress. Other frames, such as economic disparity, education and skills, culture and tradition, and health and well-being, are used less frequently but still contribute to a multifaceted view of gender equality. The diversity of frames used by the media indicates a comprehensive approach to discussing gender equality, though the emphasis varies across different dimensions. Therefore, the predominance of the social justice and political empowerment frames suggests that media narratives are strongly aligned with advocating for equitable treatment and increased political representation as crucial elements of national development.

The research objective three sought to understand the perceptions of Benin publics regarding the media framing of gender equality in Nigeria. The data from Tables 5 and 6 offer insights into how the media's portrayal of gender equality affects public opinions and awareness, and how influential these portrayals are perceived to be. In Table 5, a combined total of 36.9% of respondents believe that the media's portrayal of gender equality is accurate. This indicates a notable scepticism about the reliability of media representations of gender equality in Nigeria, suggesting that many people perceive discrepancies between media portrayals and the actual situation. Also, a substantial majority of respondents perceive Nigerian media as biased in their framing of gender equality issues, with 52.4% acknowledging this bias. This perception of bias is critical, as it reflects concerns that media representations may be skewed or not fully objective, which could influence public understanding and attitudes.

Furthermore, the perception of effectiveness is more positive, with 84.2% of respondents believing that Nigerian media are effective in raising awareness about gender equality issues. This high level of perceived effectiveness suggests that while there are concerns about bias and accuracy, the media are still recognised for their role in promoting awareness. In the same vein, a majority of 78.3% believe that media framing affects public attitudes towards gender equality. This indicates that respondents see a direct link between media portrayals and societal attitudes,

underscoring the significant role media play in shaping perceptions and influencing public opinion.

However, respondents are divided on whether the Nigerian media adequately represent the challenges and successes related to gender equality. With 41.9% agreeing and a similar proportion (46.6%) disagreeing, there is a split opinion on how well media coverage reflects the complexities of gender equality. Similarly, the perception of fairness in the representation of different genders is also mixed. While 48.7% feel that the media are fair, 41.4% believe that the media's representation is unfair. This suggests that while some respondents view media portrayals as balanced, others feel that gender representation might be skewed or incomplete.

The findings indicate that while there is significant recognition of the Nigerian media's role in raising awareness about gender equality, there is also a considerable level of scepticism regarding the accuracy and bias of media portrayals. The perceived effectiveness of media in increasing awareness is high, yet concerns about fairness and representation remain prominent. The strong perception of media influence on public attitudes towards gender equality underscores the importance of media framing in shaping societal views.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated public perceptions in Benin regarding media framing of gender equality and its implications for national development in Nigeria. The findings reveal that while media content on gender equality is widely encountered, its effectiveness is often undermined by skepticism about its accuracy, fairness, and credibility. Media frames in Nigeria predominantly emphasize themes of social justice and political empowerment, reflecting the media's focus on advocacy and representation. However, the public's concerns about bias and partiality underscore a critical gap between the media's intended message and its reception. This gap highlights the complex dynamics between media framing, public trust, and social impact.

The research contributes to the broader theoretical discourse on media framing by illustrating how the media not only serves as a vehicle for promoting gender equality but also shapes public attitudes toward its significance. Specifically, the study underscores the dual role of the media as both an advocate for social progress and an influencer of public opinion. Despite the frequency of media content advocating gender equality, public skepticism suggests that the media's framing strategies often fail to fully engage or persuade audiences, revealing a disconnect that must be addressed.

This skepticism points to the need for a critical reassessment of how gender equality is framed in Nigerian media. Perceptions of bias and inaccuracy diminish the media's ability to act as an effective advocate for societal change. To bridge this gap, the media must prioritize accuracy, balance, and fairness in its portrayals. These elements are not just ethical imperatives but strategic necessities for building public trust and ensuring that media content resonates with audiences. The findings emphasize that the

impact of media framing on public perceptions depends as much on the perceived credibility of the content as on its frequency.

Moreover, the study reinforces the pivotal role of media framing in advancing national development goals. Gender equality, as portrayed by the media, emerges as a foundational element of sustainable development. However, this research highlights that the quality of media framing—its fairness, accuracy, and contextual sensitivity—is as crucial as its prevalence. Effective media advocacy requires not only consistent messaging but also nuanced, transparent, and credible portrayals to foster widespread public support and meaningful societal engagement.

In conclusion, this study deepens our understanding of the interplay between media framing and public perceptions, particularly in the Nigerian context. It highlights the importance of aligning media strategies with audience expectations and perceptions to maximize their impact. By addressing the public's concerns about bias and credibility, the media can strengthen its role as a catalyst for gender equality and national development. Ultimately, the findings call for a more deliberate and reflective approach to media framing, ensuring that it serves as an effective tool for societal progress and transformative change.

BIODATA

Emeke Precious Nwaoboli lectures at the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Benson Idahosa University, Edo State, Nigeria. He is also a Ph.D. candidate at Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Edo State. His research focuses on multi-media studies. He is a member of the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE). His ORCID is: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4889-9441>.

Adédèjì Fred Aríjeníwà is a PhD student in Mass Communication at Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Nigeria. He holds a Bachelor's in Mass Communication from the National Open University of Nigeria and a Master's from the University of Benin. His research focuses on intercultural and development communication, particularly the role of new media. Aríjeníwà's work has been published in conference proceedings, journals, and book chapters, reflecting his deep interest in the intersection of communication and societal change. Email: dejiarijeniwa@gmail.com.

REFERENCES

- Adewunmi, O. E., & Aleshinloye, O. S. (2024). Media Framing of Women's Issues on Television Continental (TVC)'S *Your View* and Its Influence n Public Perception In Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 8(3), 28-36. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803197>
- Ahmed, R. (2025, January 2). Media Framing & Elections : Analyzing the Print Media Framing & Its Impacts during 2018 Elections in Pakistan. *HAL : Open Science*. <https://theses.hal.science/tel-04861145v1/file/2021LILUH067.pdf>
- Akinlami, F. (2024). Media and Gender Identities in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 11(7), 30-37. <https://doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.1107004>
- Aladi, J. A., & Okoro, N. (2021). Media Representation of Nigerian Women in the News: Evidence from Selected Newspapers. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(5), 437-452. <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol22/iss5/27>
- Asemah, E. S., Gujbawu, M., Ekharefo, D. O., & Okpanachi, R. A. (2022). *Research methods and procedures in mass communication* (3rd ed.). Jos: Great Future Press. ISBN: 978-076-403-8
- Atar, Ö. G. (2020). Social Gender Representation in the Context of the Representation Problem in the Media. In *Advances in Media, Entertainment and the Arts (AMEA) Book Series*. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-0128-3.ch002>
- Calviño, N., Georgieva, K., & Renaud-Basso, O. (2024, March 8). *The economic power of gender equality*. European Investment Bank. <https://www.eib.org/en/stories/gender-equality-power>
- Çerçi, Ümmü Özlem. (2024). A "Notification" on The Use of Social Media as A Means of Community Resilience in Crisis Management. *Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 3(2), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105003220241>
- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). California: University of California Press. ISBN 0520246985, 9780520246980
- Endong, F. P. C., & Obonganwan, E. E. (2015). Media (mis)representation of the Nigerian Woman as a Product of the Society. *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies*, 3(1), 101-106. <https://doi.org/10.15640/ijgws.v3n1p10>
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>.
- Fab-Ukozor, N. (2019). Influence of Journalist Knowledge about Gender Mainstreaming Ideology on the Reporting of Gender Issues. *Advances in Applied Sociology*, 9(7), 269-287. <https://doi.org/10.4236/aasoci.2019.97021>
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Doubleday. ISBN 0385094027, 9780385094023
- Guanah, J. S. (2023). Perceptions of Media and Gender Representation in a Multicultural Society. In *Communication, Media and Power Relations in a Multicultural Society*:

- Context, Issues and Perspectives for Development* (pp. 118–135). ACSPN Book Series. Evans Brothers. ISBN: 978-978-798-550-1
- Hedegaard, J. (2020, February 27). *The Crucial Role of Media in Achieving Gender Equality*. International Media Support. <https://www.mediasupport.org/the-crucial-role-of-media-in-achieving-gender-equality/>
- Ihechu, I. P., & Nwabuisi, P. O. (2021). Perception of the Portrayal of Women in Television Advertising amongst Umuahia Residents of Abia State, Nigeria. *British Journal of Mass Communication and Media Research*, 1(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.52589/BJMCMRVAGRQZR>
- Ihechu, I. P., Afulike, D. C., & Ndukwe, U. E. (2023). Cultural Practices against Women in Nigeria: The Media Frames and the Challenges. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/v6-i4-13>
- Iyengar, S. (1991). *Is anyone responsible? How television frames political issues*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. ISBN-10. 0226388557 ; ISBN-13. 978-0226388557
- Kattan, R. B., Khan, M. M., & Merchant, M. (2023, October). *Achieving Gender Equality in Education: Examining Progress and Constraints*. World Bank Group. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099503011032311205/pdf/IDU09e9110ff0456004aed>
- Khan, A., & Tidman, M. M. (2023). Gender Inequality in Developing Countries: A Multifactorial Review. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 6(1), 151–162. <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1991.06.01.402>
- Kiram, M. Z. (2024). Interrogating Masculinity, Gender Performance, and Power Dynamics in Indonesian Society through Taylor Swift's 'The man'. *Gender Equality: International Journal of Child and Gender Studies*, 10(2), 209. <https://doi.org/10.22373/equality.v10i2.25877>
- Krijnen, T., & Van Bauwel, S. (2021). *Gender and media: Representing, producing, consuming* (2nd Ed.). London: Routledge. ISBN 9780367332099
- Liao, C. (2023). Exploring the Influence of Public Perception of Mass Media Usage and Attitudes towards Mass Media News on Altruistic Behavior. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(8), 621. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13080621>
- Mendes, K., Ringrose, J. & Keller, J. (2019). *Digital Feminist Activism: Girls and Women Fight Back Against Rape Culture* (*Oxford Studies in Digital Politics*). London: Routledge. ISBN-10 0190697857; ISBN-13 978-0190697853
- Ndinojuo, B.-C. E. (2020). Journalistic Representation of Women in the Reportage of Military Operations against Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria. *Contratexto*, 35, 155–179. <https://doi.org/10.26439/contratexto2021.n035.4826>
- Ogwezzy-Ndisika, A. O., Faustino, B. A., Amakoh, K. O., Adesile, T. A., Ejiwunmi, S., & Oloruntoba, F. A. (2023). Gender Representation in Nigerian Media Contents and Social Reality. 145–169. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35060-36>
- Omonua, L. A., Akpor, E. D., & Olley, W. O. (2023). Mass Media Coverage of Women and Gender Inequality. *African Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 6(4), 150–165. <https://doi.org/10.52589/ajsshr-fdl6snq3>

- Onwumechili, C. (2021). Media Framing of Women's Football in Nigeria from the Early Twentieth Century to Present. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 38(12), 1249–1268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2021.1993190>
- Remitasari, A. ., & Fenton, A. J. (2024). Public Perception on The Implementation of Tax Amnesty Program. *Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 1(1), 16–31. Retrieved from <https://journal.ispr.edu/index.php/jcpr/article/view/361>
- Santonico, F., Trombetta, T., Paradiso, M. N., & Rollè, L. (2023). Gender and Media Representations: A Review of the Literature on Gender Stereotypes, Objectification and Sexualization. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(10), 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20105770>
- Sainz-De-Baranda, C., Adá-Lameiras, A., & Blanco-Ruiz, M. (2020). Gender Differences in Sports News Coverage on Twitter. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17, 5199. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20105770>.
- Song, Q. (2024). Framing in Media and Communication Studies: A Bibliometric Analysis. *Insight - News Media*, 7(1), 674. <https://doi.org/10.18282/inm674>
- Sudha, T., & Reshi, I. A. (2023). Unleashing the Power: Empowering Women for A Stronger Economy. *International Journal of Educational Review, Law And Social Sciences* /IJERLAS, 3(3), 826-833. <https://radjapublika.com/index.php/IJERLAS/article/download/818/727>
- UNICEF. (2022). *Gender Equality in Education: A Global Report*. UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/gender-equality-education-global-report>
- United Nations. (2021). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Gender equality*. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>.
- World Bank. (2022). *Gender Equality and Development*. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/gender-equality-and-development>.
- World Economic Forum. (2023). *Global Gender Gap Report 2023*. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2023>.

Implementation of Tourism Place Branding Management in Indonesia through the 'Wonderful Indonesia' Campaign

Fasya Syifa Mutma¹, Reni Dyanasari²

^{1,2}Communication Studies, Universitas Pembangunan Jaya

Submitted: July 2024, Revised: October 2024, Accepted: December 2024

ABSTRACT

Tourism has become a significant sector in Indonesia's economy since 2019. Indonesia has a tourism brand managed by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) called "Wonderful Indonesia." Since its launch in 2011 and its promotion in 2015 until the present, Indonesian tourism, especially the Wonderful Indonesia brand, has received various national and international awards. These accolades can be attributed to the marketing communication and branding efforts carried out by Kemenparekraf. There is a concept called place branding, where "Wonderful Indonesia" is applied to brand Indonesian tourism. This research aims to understand the implementation of the tourism place branding concept in the marketing communication and branding efforts of Wonderful Indonesia. This research utilizes integrated marketing communication, branding, and place branding. The research adopts a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative descriptive method. Data collection involved interviewing representatives from Kemenparekraf who were involved in marketing communication and branding activities for Wonderful Indonesia. The data was then coded and analyzed. The research findings reveal that Kemenparekraf employs marketing communication strategies, incorporating Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) components, and implements branding in line with the place branding concept. The study identifies that the branding implementation fulfills the 10 Strategic Place Brand Management Model components: brand infrastructure, stakeholder management (engagement), brand leadership, articulation, architecture, communication, identity, experience, word-of-mouth, and evaluation. Kemenparekraf also effectively implements an integrated marketing communication (IMC) approach by utilizing various tools, such as advertising, promotion, sponsorships, marketing events, experiential marketing, product placement, branded content, packaging, trade shows and fairs, personal selling, direct marketing, and public relations.

Keywords: *branding strategy, integrated marketing communication, Kemenparekraf RI, strategic brand management, tourism place branding.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become a significant sector of the Indonesian economy (Johanes, et al, 2024). For several years before the pandemic, tourism development had been growing rapidly. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the 2022 Report on Tourism Trends and Policies, 2019, tourism contributed

5.0% of Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, the COVID-19 pandemic 2020 resulted in a 56% decline in tourism's contribution to GDP, reducing it to only 2.2% of the total economy (Purwowidhu, 2023). Currently, Indonesian tourism is being promoted for a comeback.

To restore the glory of Indonesian tourism, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) has undertaken various efforts, one of which is the branding of the Indonesian tourism brand Wonderful Indonesia, which has been implemented since 2015 (Hakim, 2020).

As a brand equity, Wonderful Indonesia has become the identity of Indonesia's tourism and creative economy industry, which is well-known worldwide (Dewi, 2023). The Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Uno, stated that in the country brand strategy rating, Wonderful Indonesia is ranked 25th. This undoubtedly enhances the competitiveness of Indonesian tourism and the creative economy. Moreover, in its latest report, the World Economic Forum (WEF) stated that Indonesia has risen 12 ranks in the Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) (Setiawan, 2023).

Since its launch in 2011 and its promotion starting in 2015, Indonesia, especially the Wonderful Indonesia brand, has achieved various accolades. One of its successes was winning the "The Best Government Collaboration for Nation Branding" award at the Indonesia Brand Forum (IBF) Awarding 2022 (Wahab, 2023).

In 2021, Wonderful Indonesia was honored as the "Best Creative Destination" at the Creative Tourism Awards 2020, surpassing 76 nominated destinations worldwide (SetkabRI, 2021). 2019 Indonesia received three awards at the Beijing International Tourism Expo 2019: the Guest Country Award, Best Booth Design, and Most Popular Booth (Syarifah, 2019).

In 2018, the Philip Kotler Center for ASEAN Marketing named it the Brand of the Year Indonesia (Prodjo, 2018). Wonderful Indonesia won the Most Popular Both and Outstanding Booth Awards at the Beijing International Travel Expo (BITE) 2018 (Rianti, 2018). In 2017, Indonesian tourism also received numerous awards. In 2016, Indonesian tourism received 31 awards from 22 countries.

The achievements of Indonesian tourism, particularly the Wonderful Indonesia brand, are closely related to various marketing communications and branding efforts conducted by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Branding is derived from the word "brand," a statement or self-identification, a symbol, a differentiating device, a communication message, a personal identification, and a reflection of a character. Therefore, a brand also represents the value promised by a product or service (Shafitri & Anggraeni, 2020). Branding is a process of building a positive perception in consumers' minds by consistently presenting the vision and ideas of the brand, making others understand and believe in what is presented, and trusting the promises made and maintained (Chiaravalle & Schenck, 2015).

According to Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth (2015), place branding is a process of branding an area to differentiate it from others. Place branding is a complex and multidimensional policy introduced in cities for different purposes. It aims to

develop cities' socio-economic status due to long-term investments, attract newcomers and tourists, and create a well-perceived urban brand (Cudny, 2021).

In this regard, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy also applies place branding to brand tourism on a national and international level. The strategic place brand management model consists of 10 components: brand infrastructure, brand architecture, brand evaluation, brand leadership, brand experience, stakeholder management, brand identity, brand communication, brand articulation, and word of mouth. Branding is also one of the marketing communication efforts conducted by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. Marketing communication has evolved into integrated marketing communication related to planning marketing communication to convey a consistent message (Percy, 2023). Various marketing communication and branding efforts have been carried out. According to Mutma & Dyanasari (2019), the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy has implemented a strategy called BAS, which stands for Branding, Advertising, and Selling. These three components are carried out in parallel to promote Indonesian tourism further.

This study examines how the concept of tourism place branding in Indonesia is implemented through the Wonderful Indonesia brand. This study refers to several previous studies, namely the "Strategic Branding of Indonesian Tourism through Wonderful Indonesia" research by Nurul Aulia Dewi in 2023. Nurul Aulia found that the strategy used by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy is through co-branding and the use of social media, print media, and electronic media.

This study differs from previous researchers as it utilizes the concept of place branding, which includes the 10 components, which, if explored on the internet, have not been widely addressed in research. The second study is titled "Marketing Communication Planning of Wonderful Indonesia as Indonesia's Place Branding" by Fasya Syifa Mutma and Reni Dyanasari in 2019, focusing more on marketing communication planning and less on the details of its branding implementation. In contrast, this study mainly identifies implementing the concept of place branding for Indonesian tourism using the 10 components of strategic place brand management.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

a. Integrated Marketing Communication

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines (e.g., general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations) and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact (Ritonga, et al., 2023). IMC is about planning to deliver consistent messages (Percy, 2023). Components of IMC (Percy, 2023):



Figure 1: Integrated Marketing Communication (Percy, 2023).

b. Branding

Branding has become a fundamental part of a company, organization, or even an individual (Khan, 2024). Branding is closely related to the development of the organization. Branding is a process of building a positive perception in the minds of consumers by consistently presenting the vision and idea of the brand so that others understand and trust what is presented and believe in the promises made and upheld (Chiaravalle & Schenck, 2015).

A brand is built on five important elements: consistency, differentiation, relevance, esteem, and knowledge (Chiaravalle & Schenck, 2015). Research conducted by Pricilia et al. (2023) found that focusing on quality, memorability, meaningfulness, transferability, adaptability, and protectability helps evoke strong emotions, build a brand's enduring positive image, and enhance customer loyalty.

From the explanation above, it can be understood that branding is a process of giving a brand to a product or entity that can build a positive perception, making people recognize and trust the brand (Jones, 2024). This branding concept is used because it can describe how a company brands its products to increase consumer awareness of the product or the company itself. In this case, Kemenparekraf brands Indonesia through "Wonderful Indonesia." This branding concept is then further developed into place branding.

c. Place Branding

Place branding encompasses various forms, including national branding, city branding, continent branding, and tourism destination branding, and has been extensively explored in academic research (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015). As a multidimensional and complex policy, place branding is implemented in cities to achieve diverse objectives. It fosters socio-economic development by attracting long-term investments, newcomers, and tourists while creating a well-perceived urban brand.

However, the outcomes of place branding are shaped by the interests and actions of various stakeholders operating within urban spaces, such as firms, politicians, and social groups (Källström & Siljeklint, 2023). These branding policies change a city's social and economic structures, physical spaces, and overall image, ultimately contributing to its brand identity (Cudny, 2021).

Place branding extends to countries as well, focusing on creating a unique identity that sets a location apart from its competitors. The goal is to shape consumer perceptions and influence decisions by building a compelling and positive image (Swain et al., 2023). This process seeks to enhance a location's appeal by improving its reputation, addressing negative perceptions, or positioning it as an attractive destination for investors, tourists, and skilled professionals. Effective place branding can have a significant impact on local communities by generating job opportunities, boosting the economy, increasing tourism, and attracting talent to the area (Edwards, 2023).

In this context, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) employed place branding strategies through initiatives such as the "Wonderful Indonesia" campaign. This approach exemplifies the use of place branding to position Indonesia as a premier tourism destination on the global stage. The strategic place brand management model offers a comprehensive framework for managing place branding processes, comprising ten components: brand infrastructure, brand leadership, stakeholders management, brand identity, brand articulation, brand architecture, brand communication, brand experience, word of mouth, and brand evaluation (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, Ashworth, 2015).



Figure 2: Place Brand Management (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, Ashworth, 2015).

Finally, in the context of tourism, the term 'pariwisata' in Indonesian refers to recurrent or multiple journeys between locations, akin to the English word 'tour.' At the same time 'kepariwisataan' translates to "tourism," encapsulating the broader industry and activities associated with travel (Gischa, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a constructivist paradigm with a qualitative approach. The qualitative descriptive method describes how the implementation of place branding for Indonesian tourism is carried out through the "Wonderful Indonesia" brand.

Data was collected through structured interviews with representatives from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf), who were responsible for managing marketing communication and branding activities for Indonesian tourism, particularly for the "Wonderful Indonesia" campaign. A structured interview format was employed, guided by a pre-prepared interview guide derived from the research concepts.

Table 1: Informant Profile

No	Code	Role in Kemenparekraf	Relevance in Study
1.	A1 (Indri Wahyu S.)	Head of Data Analytics & Marketing Strategy	This informant is a manager who manages all tourism marketing activities, including Wonderful Indonesia.
2.	A2 (Rizka Inki F.)	The staff of Multimedia Communication	This informant is responsible for all communication activities using multimedia.
3	A3 (Gracetantina R.)	The staff of Digital Media Communication	This informant is responsible for all digital media communication activities.

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

In addition to interviews, data collection was also carried out through direct observation of Kemenparekraf's marketing communication efforts of "Wonderful Indonesia" and literature reviews of previous journal publications. The data collected was then processed using coding techniques, including open, axial, and selective coding. The data was analyzed, interpreted, and presented in the results and discussion section after the coding process.

After conducting the interviews, the researcher created interview transcripts to facilitate the coding process. Open coding was conducted by categorizing each informant's responses based on themes derived from the research concepts. Axial coding followed, and the researcher compared and integrated data across informants. Finally, selective coding was conducted to organize the data around key concepts and identify the most relevant and significant responses from informants.

The results of the selective coding were then used to develop the research findings and discussion. Furthermore, data interpretation was supported by direct observation of Kemenparekraf's marketing communication efforts for "Wonderful Indonesia."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Integrated Marketing Communication

In this section, the researcher cites previous studies related to branding activities conducted by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of

Indonesia (Kemenparekraf RI) in the "Wonderful Indonesia" campaign using the IMC framework. Additionally, the researcher includes several pieces of information gathered from online sources. This data is compiled and presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: The implementation of IMC through the Wonderful Indonesia branding activity

NO	IMC Components	Implementation
1	Advertising	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transit ads (on buses in several countries, including Indonesia) 2. Promotion of the Wonderful Indonesia logo and the beauty of various tourist destinations 3. Advertisements on electronic media (television, radio), print media (magazines, newspapers), outdoor media (billboards, bus wraps, video tron), digital media (social media, YouTube, Google, tourism sites like TripAdvisor, official website).
2	Promotion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Website www.indonesia.travel/gb/en 2. Social media presence (Instagram @wonderful.indonesia, Facebook Indonesia.Travel, Twitter @wonderfulid, TikTok @wonderfulid, YouTube Wonderful Indonesia) 3. Digital promotion through Generasi Pesona Indonesia (GenPi) and Generasi Wonderful Indonesia (GenWi).
3	Sponsorship and event marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sponsoring events such as Java Jazz 2. Creating tourism events like ITB Berlin, ATM Dubai
4	Experiential marketing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promotion during exhibitions. 2. Providing sensory wonders booths during exhibitions, offering fragrances, beverages, and Indonesian cuisine to allow people to experience firsthand the sensory wonders of Indonesia.
5	Product placement and branded content	The Wonderful Indonesia logo will be displayed in various locations.
6	Packaging	Embedding the Wonderful Indonesia logo in co-branded products through partnership programs Wonderful Indonesia Co-Branding
7	Trade shows and Fairs	Participating in and opening tourism exhibition booths at tourism events
8	Personal selling	Using endorsers, influencers, and bloggers to communicate and promote Wonderful Indonesia.
9	Direct marketing	Offering direct promotions during exhibitions.
10	Public relations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducting Wonderful Indonesia campaigns through YouTube videos and other campaign activations. 2. Utilizing social media platforms. 3. Collaborating with relevant tourism-related industries.

Source: Mutma & Dyanasari, 2019 and latest observation through internet

Table 2 illustrates the comprehensive implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategies by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) for the "Wonderful Indonesia" campaign. The IMC components are implemented through various channels and activities, showcasing the campaign's adaptability to different media and audiences. Advertising efforts span from transit ads

to digital platforms like YouTube and TripAdvisor. Promotional activities leverage an official website and active engagement across social media platforms, supported by community-driven programs like GenPi and GenWi.

Moreover, sponsorships and event marketing include partnerships with prominent international events like Java Jazz, ITB Berlin, and ATM Dubai, which bolster the campaign's global presence. Experiential marketing focuses on creating immersive sensory experiences at exhibitions, allowing participants to engage directly with Indonesian culture. Product placement, packaging, and participation in trade shows further enhance visibility and branding consistency.

Personal selling, utilizing influencers and bloggers, complements direct marketing efforts at exhibitions. Public relations strategies include social media campaigns and collaboration with tourism-related industries, ensuring a cohesive and far-reaching message about Indonesia's tourism potential.

The data presented in Table 2 aligns with the findings of Mutma and Dyanasari (2019), who highlighted the multi-channel approach adopted by Kemenparekraf in promoting the "Wonderful Indonesia" brand. These findings confirm the IMC framework's effectiveness, as Percy (2023) proposed, in achieving an integrated branding strategy. The use of diverse marketing communication components has enabled Kemenparekraf to effectively target both domestic and international audiences.

By combining traditional and digital marketing approaches, the "Wonderful Indonesia" campaign amplifies the appeal of Indonesia's tourism destinations and reinforces its position as a globally recognized tourism brand. Integrating sensory experiences, digital promotions, and collaborative initiatives further supports the campaign's goal of creating a holistic and memorable brand identity.

Place Branding

The researcher will next conduct an analysis and discussion on the correlation between the findings from the "Wonderful Indonesia" campaign, the ten components of IMC, and the ten components of place branding management. Subsequently, the researcher will provide a conclusion and recommendations based on the results of this study.

a. Brand Infrastructure

In the context of place branding for Wonderful Indonesia, the concept of brand infrastructure encompasses a location's functional and experiential attributes, including its built environment, public spaces, recreational facilities, tourism services, and accessibility (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015). Brand infrastructure refers to the foundational elements supporting the place being branded, such as attractions, amenities, and transportation networks.

Attractions represent the key features or sites presented to visitors, including natural landscapes, cultural landmarks, and unique experiences. Amenities refer to the supporting facilities that enhance the visitor experience, such as hotels, restaurants, and other service-oriented establishments. Accessibility addresses the ease visitors can

reach their desired destinations, encompassing transportation systems and logistical considerations.

With its vast array of natural and cultural attractions, Indonesia is uniquely positioned as a desirable tourism destination (Ikasari, 2021). The country boasts an impressive diversity of mountains, beaches, islands, and forests that appeal to domestic and international tourists. However, while these attractions are abundant, challenges persist in the development of amenities and accessibility. Many areas still lack sufficient hotels, restaurants, and other essential facilities to adequately support tourism. Furthermore, transportation infrastructure remains a significant limitation, with logistical constraints and limited connectivity hindering seamless access to many destinations.

These challenges align with the observations of Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth (2015), who emphasize that brand infrastructure is a critical component of place branding. The findings of this study underscore that Indonesia, despite its natural advantages, requires substantial improvements in infrastructure and amenities to maximize the potential of its tourism sector. While the nation continues to develop its tourism facilities, addressing gaps in accessibility, such as transportation and logistics, must become a strategic priority.

Interviews with three key informants corroborate these findings. All agreed that Indonesia possesses exceptional attractions; however, its supporting amenities remain underdeveloped, and transportation accessibility is insufficient. To strengthen the "Wonderful Indonesia" brand and enhance its global competitiveness, strategic investments in infrastructure, amenities, and transportation systems are essential. These improvements would not only elevate the overall tourism experience but also solidify Indonesia's position as a world-class destination.

b. Brand Leadership

The Wonderful Indonesia brand must actively engage with its stakeholders, ensuring focus and fostering commitment. Stakeholder involvement is central to brand leadership, which requires collaboration with diverse groups, including residents, activity organizations, businesses, employees, other regional destinations, and various levels of government (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015). Brand leaders must also work with visitors to promote a cohesive and inclusive branding strategy.

This aligns with insights from informants, highlighting how the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemendag) collaborates with airlines to open new flight routes and initiate incentive programs, such as flight promotions to Indonesia. Additionally, partnerships with hotels involve capacity-building initiatives, including training programs on digital marketing to enhance service promotion.

As the owner of the Wonderful Indonesia brand, Kemendag emphasizes stakeholder collaboration as a cornerstone of its branding strategy. For example, partnerships with airlines facilitate easier tourist access to Indonesia, while capacity-building programs equip industry players with essential branding and marketing skills.

Kemenparekraf's activities are deeply interconnected with its stakeholders. Destination development is managed by the Deputy of Destination Development, who ensures infrastructure and service improvements. Collaborative efforts include meetings with local tourism offices, the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI), and the Association of Indonesian Tour and Travel Agencies (ASITA) to socialize and promote the Wonderful Indonesia brand. Stakeholders are encouraged to incorporate the Wonderful Indonesia logo into their promotional materials to amplify the brand's visibility.

Moreover, Kemenparekraf implements programs such as *Sapta Pesona* (Seven Enchantments), *Pokdarwis* (Tourism-Aware Community Groups), and *Bimtek* (technical guidance workshops). These initiatives involve on-site visits to educate local communities and stakeholders about the importance of branding and tourism promotion.

These actions highlight the pivotal role of stakeholders in the communication and marketing efforts of Wonderful Indonesia. By fostering collaboration and shared ownership, stakeholders significantly contribute to the success of the place branding activities.

In the context of Wonderful Indonesia, Kemenparekraf collaborates with airlines, hotels, local tourism offices, PHRI, ASITA, and community organizations to drive the brand's success. Through socialization, education, and cooperative programs, these stakeholders collectively support the promotion and development of the Wonderful Indonesia brand.

c. Stakeholders Management

The success of Wonderful Indonesia is bolstered by the active support and contributions of external stakeholders. In the framework of place branding, stakeholder management involves identifying stakeholders, understanding their interests, and managing their interactions to achieve branding objectives (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015). This approach highlights how stakeholders are integrated into the place branding process.

Insights from informants affirm that external stakeholders play a significant role in supporting Wonderful Indonesia. For instance, Kemenparekraf collaborates with airlines to negotiate competitive flight prices to Indonesia, enhancing accessibility for tourists. Additionally, various industries create programs and promotional strategies to entice tourists to explore Indonesia's diverse attractions. Local residents also contribute by demonstrating their support and pride, often using Wonderful Indonesia promotional materials and actively advocating for Indonesian tourism through their networks.

The place branding process requires not only the involvement of brand owners but also the active participation and support of external stakeholders. Stakeholders such as airlines, tourism-related industries, and local communities significantly contribute to the marketing communication and branding efforts of Wonderful Indonesia. Their

collaboration enhances the visibility and appeal of the brand, while local residents serve as ambassadors who promote both specific destinations and the overarching brand.

These observations align with the stakeholder involvement component in place branding, as described by Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth (2015). In the context of Wonderful Indonesia, external stakeholders actively support the branding process through strategic initiatives. Airlines develop programs to attract public interest, while local residents reinforce the branding efforts by promoting destinations and embracing the Wonderful Indonesia identity. This synergy between stakeholders and brand management underlines the essential role of external support in the success of place branding initiatives.

d. Brand Identity

Wonderful Indonesia has a distinct identity that defines its essence and differentiates it from other brands. In the context of place branding, brand identity refers to the core characteristics that make a brand unique and recognizable (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015). Simply put, it encapsulates the brand's uniqueness and character. According to informants, Wonderful Indonesia possesses a strong identity, with aspirations for the brand to achieve the same iconic status in tourism as Aqua for bottled water or Teh Botol for bottled tea.

The brand identity of Wonderful Indonesia is rooted in its concept of the "five wonders," representing the diversity and richness of Indonesia in terms of natural beauty, adventure, modernity, sensory experiences, and cultural heritage (Kemenparekraf RI, 2021). This identity underscores the nation's unparalleled diversity and abundant offerings. Consistency in embodying this essence has been instrumental in positioning Wonderful Indonesia as a formidable brand on the global stage, competing effectively with other Southeast Asian nations.

The alignment between the brand's essence and its competitive performance supports the notion of brand identity as articulated by Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth (2015). Through its "five wonders," Wonderful Indonesia successfully communicates its core values and unique attributes, emphasizing the richness and diversity of the country.

e. Brand Articulation

The visual representation of Wonderful Indonesia plays a crucial role in its place branding. Brand articulation involves the presentation of a brand through various forms of marketing communication, including visual and verbal elements such as the brand name, logo, color palette, and imagery (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015).



Figure 3: Wonderful Indonesia Logo (Kemenparekraf RI, 2024).

The Wonderful Indonesia logo serves as a vivid example of brand articulation. Featuring the Garuda bird, five colorful strokes, and the name "Wonderful Indonesia," the logo symbolizes unity and conveys the brand's narrative. The five colors represent the diversity and beauty of Indonesia, aligned with the "five wonders" concept. According to informants, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) intentionally designed these visual elements to reflect Indonesia's identity as a land of wonders.

This approach aligns with Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth's (2015) conceptualization of brand articulation, where a brand's identity is communicated through carefully crafted visual and verbal expressions. The Wonderful Indonesia logo encapsulates the brand's essence, portraying Indonesia as a nation of diverse wonders while reinforcing its identity across various media platforms.

Wonderful Indonesia demonstrates both brand identity and articulation, creating a cohesive and compelling representation of Indonesia's richness and diversity. Through the "five wonders" concept and the iconic visual design of its logo, the brand not only captures the essence of Indonesia but also positions itself as a prominent and competitive entity in the global tourism industry.

f. Brand Architecture

Brand architecture pertains to how Wonderful Indonesia organizes and manages associated sub-brands connected to its identity. It involves designing and coordinating a portfolio of brands that represent the broader community or place (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015). In the case of Wonderful Indonesia, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) oversees derivative brands such as Wonderful Kepri, Enjoy Jakarta, and Stunning Bandung. These sub-brands adopt design elements, such as logos and color schemes, inspired by the Wonderful Indonesia brand, ensuring visual and thematic consistency.



Figure 4: Logo of Wonderful Kepri, Enjoy Jakarta & Stunning Bandung (Collected by Author, 2024)

Although each region under these derivative brands showcases its unique characteristics, Kemenparekraf maintains a unified framework that reflects the spirit

and essence of Wonderful Indonesia. For example, Enjoy Jakarta highlights the vibrant urban appeal of Indonesia's capital, while Wonderful Kepri emphasizes the natural and cultural attractions of the Riau Islands. Despite their distinct identities, these destination brands collectively reinforce the overarching narrative of Wonderful Indonesia.

The relationship between the master brand, *Wonderful Indonesia,* and its derivative sub-brands exemplifies effective destination branding. Each sub-brand highlights the unique attributes of its region while aligning with the parent brand's guidelines, creating a unified tourism image for Indonesia. This approach reflects the principles of brand architecture in place branding, as outlined by Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth (2015). By integrating sub-brands under a cohesive identity, Kemenparekraf ensures consistent messaging and representation across Indonesia's diverse destinations.

Kemenparekraf's brand architecture strategy integrates derivative brands into the Wonderful Indonesia framework, creating a unified identity that supports the uniqueness of individual regions and the overarching brand narrative. Through this cohesive approach, Wonderful Indonesia successfully communicates the richness and diversity of Indonesian tourism on both regional and global scales.

g. Brand Communication

Wonderful Indonesia must actively communicate its identity and message to its target audiences as a brand. Brand communication encompasses activities to convey brand identity, including the promotional mix used to support this effort (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015). The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) allocates a significant portion of its resources—approximately 80%—to branding and advertising, reflecting its commitment to ensuring effective brand communication. Through its tagline, "Explore Further," the advertising content seeks to instill a clear understanding of Wonderful Indonesia and encourage tourism engagement.

The promotional approach incorporates a strategic mix of branding, advertising, and selling (BAS) to reinforce the brand identity while inspiring potential visitors to act. Kemenparekraf's integrated marketing communication includes advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, and event marketing, with sponsorships supporting. These combined tactics ensure consistent brand messaging and enhance the visibility of Wonderful Indonesia across multiple channels.

This approach aligns with Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth's (2015) conceptualization of brand communication in place branding. By employing the BAS strategy and leveraging a comprehensive promotional mix, Kemenparekraf effectively communicates Wonderful Indonesia's unique attributes, building a strong and cohesive brand identity.

h. Brand Experience

Kemenparekraf also prioritizes creating memorable and immersive experiences for audiences interacting with the Wonderful Indonesia brand. Brand experience, as

defined by Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth (2015), relates to consumer engagement with a brand, influencing their perceptions and emotional connections. For Wonderful Indonesia, this experience is encapsulated in its tagline, "Explore Further," which invites audiences to discover Indonesia's natural beauty, cultural richness, and diverse attractions.

One prominent aspect of Wonderful Indonesia's brand experience strategy involves sensory engagement. During international exhibitions, Kemenparekraf sets up interactive booths where visitors can enjoy activities such as tasting traditional Indonesian coffee, herbal drinks (jamu), and local cuisine, or experiencing spa treatments that highlight Indonesia's wellness heritage. These sensory experiences aim to leave a lasting impression and communicate the wonders of Indonesia in a tangible way.

By creating such immersive encounters, Kemenparekraf strives to position Indonesia as an exceptional destination filled with beauty and diversity. Visitors are encouraged to perceive the country not only as a travel destination but as a place of unmatched cultural and natural richness.

This strategic focus on brand experience aligns with Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth's (2015) framework for place branding. By offering direct, memorable interactions that reflect Indonesia's unique qualities, Kemenparekraf enhances brand perception and strengthens Wonderful Indonesia's global identity.

Kemenparekraf's initiatives in brand communication and experience exemplify a well-rounded approach to place branding. Through its BAS (Branding, Advertising, and selling) strategy and emphasis on creating impactful experiences, Wonderful Indonesia conveys its identity as a diverse, captivating, and must-visit destination.

i. Word of Mouth

Word of Mouth (WoM) plays a vital role in promoting the "Wonderful Indonesia" brand, leveraging informal communication to enhance brand visibility and engagement (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015). Kemenparekraf utilizes digital platforms to amplify WoM through strategies such as family trips for international bloggers, who share their experiences online, sparking discussions and raising awareness of Indonesia's tourism offerings. These interactions, driven by social media, significantly broaden public knowledge of the brand.

High-profile visits by renowned figures like Julia Roberts and King Salman further strengthen WoM. Their positive experiences and endorsements create ripple effects, both offline and online, generating informal recommendations and discussions that enhance Indonesia's global image. The viral nature of these endorsements on digital platforms amplifies their impact, aligning with modern tourism trends.

Kemenparekraf's integration of technology in its WoM strategy underscores its effectiveness. Bloggers' content and the virality of celebrity visits exemplify how digital media has become a critical tool in expanding the reach and recognition of Wonderful Indonesia. Consistent with Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth's (2015) place branding

model, WoM emerges as a powerful component in building and sustaining a strong tourism brand. Through targeted initiatives, Kemenparekraf has successfully harnessed WoM to position Indonesia as a top global destination.

j. Brand Evaluation

The Wonderful Indonesia brand recognizes the importance of conducting evaluations to measure the effectiveness of its branding efforts. These evaluations are essential for gathering feedback on the brand experience and assessing the impact of marketing activities, brand infrastructure, stakeholder involvement, and the overall identity of both the brand and the destination (Kavaratzis, Warnaby, & Ashworth, 2015). This approach is evidenced by the brand's significant achievements, including receiving 46 international awards across 22 countries in 2016 and the 14th UNWTO Award for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism in 2018 (Adikurnia, 2018). Moreover, positive feedback is reflected in Indonesia's improved global ranking as 2nd Best Tourism in ASEAN (Dwibaskoro, 2024), surpassing prominent tourism brands from Hong Kong, South Korea, Thailand, and Malaysia.

Table 3: Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Strategies and Place Branding Management for Promoting Wonderful Indonesia

No	IMC Components	Implementations	Analysis (Relation to 10 Place Branding Management Models)	Recommendations for Kemenparekraf RI
1.	Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Transit ads (on buses in Indonesia and abroad) b. Promotion of the Wonderful Indonesia logo c. Advertisements on TV, radio, print, billboards, social media, YouTube, etc. 	<p>Aligns with Brand Communication: Ensures the brand's message reaches a broad audience through diverse media channels. Enhances Brand Identity by consistently displaying the logo and tagline.</p>	<p>Focus on personalized digital ads using AI for targeted marketing. Collaborate with streaming platforms to integrate tourism ads.</p>
2.	Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Website (www.indonesia.travel) b. Social media presence c. Digital promotion through communities like GenPi and GenWi 	<p>Strengthens Brand Communication: Promotes Indonesia's offerings through an engaging online presence. Enhances Word of Mouth by involving local communities and online advocates.</p>	<p>Expand virtual tours and gamification features on the website. Increase engagement with influencers to amplify brand visibility.</p>
3.	Sponsorship and Event Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Sponsoring Java Jazz b. Participation in global tourism events (ITB Berlin, ATM Dubai) 	<p>Highlights Stakeholder Management: Engages diverse stakeholders to promote the brand. Supports Brand</p>	<p>Sponsor additional cultural and sports events to attract niche markets. Invest in hybrid</p>

No	IMC Components	Implementations	Analysis (Relation to 10 Place Branding Management Models)	Recommendations for Kemenparekraf RI
			Experience by creating impactful impressions at events.	(online and offline) event models for global reach.
4.	Experiential Marketing	a. Booths offering sensory experiences (aromas, drinks, cuisine) b. Promotion at exhibitions	Links to Brand Experience : Provides direct and memorable interactions with Indonesia’s cultural richness. Reinforces Brand Identity by showcasing sensory wonders.	Develop permanent sensory experience centers in key cities worldwide. Use AR/VR to offer virtual experiences of Indonesian attractions.
5.	Product Placement and Branded Content	Excellent Indonesia logo placement at strategic locations	Connects with Brand Articulation : Enhances visibility and ensures consistent brand messaging.	Explore partnerships for logo placement in international films or global sports tournaments.
6.	Packaging	Co-branded products featuring the Wonderful Indonesia logo	Ties to Brand Architecture : Aligns product design with the brand’s identity, enhancing recognition and appeal.	Expand collaborations with international FMCG brands for co-branded product packaging.
7.	Trade Shows and Fairs	Participation in international tourism exhibitions	Supports Brand Infrastructure : Showcases Indonesia’s tourism capabilities while addressing gaps in logistics and accessibility.	Incorporate interactive digital displays at exhibitions to engage visitors and collect feedback on tourism interests.
8.	Personal Selling	Use of influencers, bloggers, and endorsers to promote tourism	Enhances Word of Mouth : Creates organic promotion through trusted personalities. Strengthens Stakeholder Management by involving various partners.	Collaborate with micro-influencers to target niche markets. Provide training for local guides to act as brand ambassadors.
9.	Direct Marketing	Promotions during exhibitions	Aligns with Brand Communication : Ensures consistent and direct engagement with potential tourists.	Offer personalized souvenirs or promotional materials that reflect individual tourist preferences.
10.	Public Relations	a. Campaigns through YouTube and social media	Connects with Brand Leadership :	Create crisis communication

No	IMC Components	Implementations	Analysis (Relation to 10 Place Branding Management Models)	Recommendations for Kemenparekraf RI
		b. Partnerships with tourism industries	Demonstrates strategic collaboration with stakeholders to amplify the brand.	strategies to handle tourism-related challenges effectively.

Source: Data Processed by Author (2024)

The implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategies in the “Wonderful Indonesia” campaign aligns effectively with the Ten Place Branding Management Models proposed by Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth (2015). Table 3 highlights how IMC components—advertising, promotion, sponsorships, experiential marketing, digital engagement, and public relations—work cohesively to enhance Indonesia’s tourism brand. Strategies like global event participation, transit advertisements, and sensory marketing could strengthened the brand’s global visibility and created memorable experiences that align with modern tourism trends.

For example, the strategic use of social media amplifies Word of Mouth, while experiential tools like AR/VR could reinforce Indonesia’s unique cultural identity. The campaign’s success is evident in the rising Brand Performance Index and increased international recognition, validating Kemenparekraf’s coordinated efforts and adherence to theoretical frameworks of place branding. These achievements also underscore the importance of stakeholder involvement, cohesive messaging, and audience-centric strategies in building a strong tourism brand.

To sustain this momentum, Kemenparekraf must integrate advanced technologies like AI-driven personalized marketing and hybrid event models. Collaborations with influencers, FMCG brands, and international stakeholders, as demonstrated in prior research (Qausya & Bernadette, 2023), can further elevate branding outcomes. Addressing logistical gaps, establishing permanent sensory experience centers, and utilizing data-driven insights will ensure “Wonderful Indonesia” remains competitive and relevant.

Additionally, the campaign’s impact is reflected in the growing number of international tourists and its outperforming of regional competitors like Thailand and Malaysia in global tourism rankings (TPBO, 2024). These outcomes confirm the effectiveness of Indonesia’s branding strategies and position “Wonderful Indonesia” as a leading global tourism brand, celebrating its "Five Wonders" while driving sustainable growth in the sector..

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the effective implementation of tourism place branding through the "Wonderful Indonesia" campaign. Drawing on integrated marketing communication (IMC) and place branding concepts, the research identifies the successful integration of Kavaratzis, Warnaby, and Ashworth’s (2015) ten strategic components of place

branding: brand infrastructure, leadership, stakeholder management, identity, articulation, architecture, communication, experience, word of mouth, and evaluation.

The findings reveal that "Wonderful Indonesia" fulfills these components, showcasing strong collaboration between the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) and various stakeholders. The campaign strategically utilizes IMC tools, including advertising, promotions, sponsorships, event marketing, experiential marketing, and digital platforms, to enhance Indonesia's global image. The branding emphasizes Indonesia's diverse cultural, natural, and modern attractions, successfully creating a compelling and memorable destination experience.

Academically, this research enriches the discourse on tourism marketing and place branding. Practically, it serves as a guide for tourism managers to develop robust place branding strategies. It is recommended that Kemenparekraf continually refine their branding and IMC strategies to maintain relevance and global competitiveness. Future research could explore the effectiveness of these efforts from the perspective of international and domestic audiences, providing deeper insights into the campaign's impact on tourism growth and perception.

BIODATA

Fasya Syifa Mutma, S.I.Kom., M.I.Kom, graduated with honors (Cum Laude) in Communication Science and later earned a master's degree in Strategic Corporate Communication, also with honors. She is now an educator specializing in public relations, event management, environmental communication, and public speaking. Her research focuses on marketing communication, public relations, and environmental communication.

Reni Dyanasari, S.I.Kom, M.Si holds a bachelor's degree in public relations and a master's degree in marketing communication. With experience as a Marketing Planner in Indonesia's media industry, she is now a full-time lecturer at Universitas Pembangunan Jaya, teaching public relations and communication. Her research focuses on virtual communities and public relations.

REFERENCES

- Adikurnia, M. I. (2018, January 18). *Bangga! Indonesia Raih Juara Inovasi Wisata UNWTO Di Spanyol*. KOMPAS.com. <https://travel.kompas.com/read/2018/01/18/180111027/bangga-indonesia-raih-juara-inovasi-wisata-unwto-di-spanyol>
- Chiaravalle, B. & Schenck, B. F. (2015). *Branding for Dummies, 2nd Edition*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Cudny, W. (2021). *Place Event Marketing in The Asia Pacific Region: Branding and Promotion in Cities*. Routledge: New York.
- Dewi, N., A. (2023). *Strategi Branding Pariwisata Indonesia melalui Wonderful Indonesia*. Senaskah: Seminar Nasional Komunikasi Administrasi Negara Dan Hukum 1(1)-2023, 13-20. Accessed on 23 July 2023 from <https://doi.org/10.30656/senaskah.v1i1.234>
- Dwibaskoro, A. (2024, December 13). *Indonesia's Tourism Ranking in 2024: Second Best in ASEAN. Seven Stones Indonesia*. <https://sevenstonesindonesia.com/blog/indonesias-tourism-ranking-in-2024-second-best-in-asean/>
- Edwards, C. (2024, February 20). *Place branding, the key to connecting communities*. Cavendish. <https://cavendishconsulting.com/article/place-branding-the-key-to-connecting-communities/>
- Gischa, S. (2022, August 29). *Tourism, Mengenal Istilah Pariwisata dalam Bahasa Inggris*. KOMPAS.com. <https://www.kompas.com/skola/read/2022/08/29/173000069/tourism-mengenal-istilah-pariwisata-dalam-bahasa-inggris>
- Hakim, I. N. (2020). *Bagaimana Mengukur Efektifitas Co-branding wonderful Indonesia: Studi Konseptual*. *Jurnal Kepariwisata Indonesia : Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kepariwisata Indonesia*, 14(1), 21-37. <https://doi.org/10.47608/jki.v14i12020.21-37>
- Ikasari, H. (2021). *Strategies to improve the attractiveness of Sam Poo Kong temple as cultural tourism site of Semarang city, Central Java, Indonesia*. *Journal of Indonesian Tourism and Development Studies*, 9(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.jitode.2021.009.01.01>
- Johanes, R., Takari, D., & Sabirin, S. (2024). *Review of the tourist industry's role in Indonesia's GDP growth*. *Journal Magister Ilmu Ekonomi Universtas Palangka Raya : GROWTH*, 10(1), 8-17. <https://doi.org/10.52300/grow.v10i1.15151>
- Jones, K. (2024, August 12). *Council post: The importance of branding in business*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesagencycouncil/2021/03/24/the-importance-of-branding-in-business/>
- Källström, L., & Siljeklinton, P. (2023). *Place branding in the eyes of the place stakeholders – paradoxes in the perceptions of the meaning and scope of place branding*. *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 17(1), 74-89. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jpmd-12-2022-0124>

- Kavaratzis, M., Warnaby, G., & Ashworth, G. J. (2015). *Rethink Place Branding: Comprehensive Brand Development for Cities and Regions*. New York: Springer.
- Kemenparekraf RI. (2021, May 20). *Storynomics tourism Dari 5 Destinasi super Prioritas*. Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif. <https://kemenparekraf.go.id/hasil-pencarian/storynomics-tourism-dari-5-destinasi-super-prioritas>
- Kemenparekraf RI. (2024). Logo Wonderful Indonesia. Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif. <https://kemenparekraf.go.id/profil/logo/logo-wonderful-indonesia>
- Khan, A. (2024, October 16). *Building a brand: Personal vs. business*. Rushford Business School, Switzerland. <https://rushford.ch/insights/building-a-brand-personal-vs-business/>
- Mutma, F., S., Dyanasari, R. (2019). *Perencanaan Komunikasi Pemasaran Wonderful Indonesia Sebagai Place Branding Indonesia*. Jurnal Communicare LSPR, 5 (2), 61-80. Accessed on 21 May 2023 from <https://doi.org/10.37535/101005220185>
- Percy, L. (2023). *Strategic Integrated Marketing Communication*, 4th Ed. New York: Routledge.
- Pricilla, C., Adriani, V., & Utomo, A. G. (2023). Innovative brand awareness strategies: Push, pull, and Pass marketing in Indonesian fashion. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 2(2), 58-79. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105002220244>
- Prodjo, W., A. (9 Maret 2018). *Wonderful Indonesia Raih "Brand of The Year Indonesia 2018"*. Kompas.com. Accessed on 23 July 2023 from <https://travel.kompas.com/read/2018/03/09/210000527/wonderful-indonesia-raih-brand-of-the-year-indonesia-2018->
- Purwowidhu, C., S. (16 Mei 2023). *Kian Melesat di 2023, Pariwisata Indonesia Bersiap Menuju Level Prapandemi*. Kemenkeu.go.id. Accessed on 23 July 2023 from <https://mediakeuangan.kemenkeu.go.id/article/show/kian-melesat-di-2023-pariwisata-indonesia-bersiap-menuju-level-prapandemi>
- Qausya, A. A., & Bernadette, S. (2023). Strategic marketing public relations for brand elevation: A case study of the #JacquelleDisneyEdition campaign. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 2(2), 80-102. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105002220245>
- Rianti, E. (23 Juni 2018). *Wonderful Indonesia Raih Dua Penghargaan Bergengsi di BITE 2018*. Bisnis.com. Accessed on 23 July 2023 from <https://ekonomi.bisnis.com/read/20180623/12/808748/wonderful-indonesia-raih-dua-penghargaan-bergengsi-di-bite-2018>.
- Ritonga, A. G., Pratiwi, G. S., & Islahiyah, H. (2023). Implementasi Integrated Marketing Communication dalam Membangun Brand Awareness Produk Fashion Erigo. *Warta ISKI*, 5(2), 194-208. <https://doi.org/10.25008/wartaiski.v5i2.195>
- Setiawan, A. (14 Desember 2022). *Menparekraf Ajak Mitra Co-Branding Wonderful Indonesia Perkuat Kolaborasi*. Kemenparekraf.go.id. Accessed on 23 July 2023 from <https://wonderfulimages.kemenparekraf.go.id/read/995/menparekraf-ajak-mitra-co-branding-wonderful-indonesia-perkuat-kolaborasi-di-2023>

- SetkabRI. (6 February 2021). *Wonderful Indonesia Raih "Best Creative Destination" di Ajang Creative Tourism Awards*. Setkabri.go.id. Accessed on 23 July 2023 from <https://setkab.go.id/wonderful-indonesia-raih-best-creative-destination-di-ajang-creative-tourism-awards/>
- Shafitri, S., Anggraeni, T. (2020). *Analisa Strategi Co-Branding Smitten by Pattern Pada Sebelum dan Selama Pandemi Covid-19*. Jurnal Komunikasi 11(2)-2020, 159- 168. Accessed on 21 May 2023 from <https://ejournal.bsi.ac.id/ejurnal/index.php/jkom/article/view/8681>
<https://doi.org/10.31294/jkom.v11i2.8681>
- Swain, S., Jebarajakirthy, C., Sharma, B. K., Maseeh, H. I., Agrawal, A., Shah, J., & Saha, R. (2023). Place branding: A systematic literature review and future research agenda. *Journal of Travel Research*, 63(3), 535-564. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875231168620>
- Syarifah, F. (26 Juni 2019). *Mantap, Wonderful Indonesia Raih Tiga Penghargaan di BITE 2019*. Liputan6.com. Accessed on 23 July 2023 from <https://www.liputan6.com/lifestyle/read/3998784/mantap-wonderful-indonesia-raih-tiga-penghargaan-di-bite-2019>
- TPBO. (2024, August 13). Indonesia - Country performance, brand strength, and reputation. The Place and Brand Observer. <https://placebrandobserver.com/indonesia-country-performance-brand-strength-reputation/>
- Wahab, H. (21 September 2022). *Wonderful Indonesia Sukses Raih Penghargaan dalam Indonesia Brand Forum 2022*. Metro.suara.com. Accessed on 23 July 2023 from <https://metro.suara.com/read/2022/09/21/141342/wonderful-indonesia-sukses-raih-penghargaan-dalam-indonesia-brand-forum-2022>

Re-conceptualizing Public Relations Practices in Nigeria: A Framework to Address Systemic Challenges

Nsini Anselem Eyo^{1,2}

¹Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

²Selem Consults, Nigeria

Submitted: November 2024, **Revised:** Desember 2024, **Accepted:** January 2025

ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper examines the roles and challenges of public relations practice in Nigeria by proposing a framework to address systemic issues hindering its professionalization. Despite cultural diversity shaping PR globally, the practice in Nigeria faces significant obstacles, including limited strategic involvement, deployment of unqualified practitioners, political interference, inadequate education and training, weak ethical standards, and lack of a robust regulatory framework. The absence of autonomy by the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) further exacerbates these issues, allowing individuals without formal training or specialization to practice, thereby undermining the profession's credibility. Using a narrative literature review, the study synthesizes existing research to identify gaps and develop a conceptual framework aimed at addressing these challenges. Drawing from role theory in public relations and Grunig's Excellence theory, the paper proposes a tripartite framework for PR professionalization in Nigeria. This framework emphasizes education to impart theoretical knowledge and practical skills, accreditation to ensure eligibility for membership and registration, and certification to uphold ethical standards and professional conduct as well as autonomy of the NIPR as the primary regulatory body of the profession in the country. By implementing this tripartite model, PR practitioners in Nigeria can be empowered to perform strategic managerial and operational communication roles effectively. This will enable practitioners and by extension NIPR to uphold the integrity of the profession, and foster standardization and professionalization in alignment with global best practices. Hence, this study provides actionable insights for re-conceptualizing PR in Nigeria, advancing its role as a credible and strategic profession.

Keywords: *public relations, PR challenges, PR practitioners, role theory, tripartite PR framework.*

INTRODUCTION

Public relations (PR) is widely recognized as a strategic communication and management process aimed at fostering mutual understanding and maintaining harmonious relationships between organizations and their publics by shaping perceptions and building positive interactions (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Qausya & Bernadette, 2023). This comprehensive definition underscores key principles such as transparency, mutual

understanding, effective communication, and adherence to ethical and professional standards.

Furthermore, Adamu and Auwal (2023) emphasized that globalization has facilitated the integration of universal PR principles while adapting them to fit local contexts. This adaptation is driven by the cultural diversity, varying beliefs, societal structures, and governance systems that shape the distinct identities and practices of different nations and communities (Anani-Bossman & Tandoh, 2023). Such contextual variations highlight the dynamic and flexible nature of PR in addressing the unique needs of diverse environments.

Consequently, Chaidaroon and Hou (2021) observed that while Western perspectives of PR practice have been widely adopted globally, it is crucial to adapt generic principles to the unique cultural, political, social, and economic conditions of diverse societies. Such contextualization is essential for fostering the development of global standards for the PR profession (Abdullah, et al, 2023). Thus, a considerable number of culturally specific elements have been recognized across PR practices in Western, European, Asian, and African contexts. Gezgin (2019) emphasizes that the direct application of the global Western PR model is not universally feasible. Instead, incorporating localized practices into PR frameworks can enhance standards that are both effective and reflective of the unique characteristics of individual societies.

Globally, public relations practices are shaped by the socio-economic and political contexts in which they operate, influencing their roles, ethical frameworks, and interdisciplinary approaches (Al-Yaqoub et al., 2019; Alper, 2024). For instance, the British Public Information Model prioritizes transparency and accountability by disseminating truthful and factual information (Dalton, 2022).

In the United States, the Two-Way Symmetrical Model emphasizes ethical communication and mutual understanding, fostering balanced relationships between organizations and their publics (Grunig, 2022). Meanwhile, Europe's Consensus-Oriented PR approach highlights collaboration and inclusiveness, mirroring the cultural and political diversity of the region (Verčič et al., 2015). In contrast, China's "Guanxi" system is deeply rooted in relational cultural values, focusing on building personal networks and mutual obligations through gift exchanges and favors (Servaes, 2016). These diverse models demonstrate how public relations practices adapt to reflect the unique values and dynamics of their respective societies.

Also, in Nigeria's Brown Envelope and India's Paid News practices operate within specific socio-economic contexts, encouraging content publication and promotional messaging (Lamwaka, 2022; Tripathi, 2023). While these practices cater to local needs, they are met with considerable criticism.

For example, Guanxi is often condemned for promoting relational manipulation and ethical compromises, while Brown Envelope and Paid News are criticized for eroding transparency and trust (Chen et al., 2020). This tension has been very apparent between context-specific practices and globally recognized ethical standards epitomized by the UK's Public Information Model, the USA's Two-Way Symmetrical Model, and Europe's

Consensus-Oriented PR, which anchors on truth, accountability, and trust to the stakeholders.

Background Study

Public Relations practice in Nigeria dates to the colonial era, primarily driven by government efforts to manage public opinion and promote policies (Sule, & Ridwanullah, 2023). Over the decades, PR has expanded to the private and non-governmental sectors, becoming a critical tool for managing public perception and fostering relationships (Igben, 2022). However, its evolution has been slow and inconsistent compared to global advancements, primarily due to systemic inadequacies in education, training, and regulation (Aja et al., 2019). In the Nigerian context, however, the practice of PR takes on unique characteristics shaped by the country's socio-political, economic, and cultural realities (Truong, 2024).

Historically and at present, PR has been viewed as a means through which institutions interact with various stakeholders to develop better communication and enhance corporate image or reputation in Nigeria (Ukonu et al., 2018). The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), established by Decree No. 16 of 1990, thus defined PR and "the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizational leaders, and implementing planned programs of action that will serve both the organization and the public interest" (Aja et al., 2019). This definition thus underlines the dual responsibility of PR in achieving organizational objectives and the society at large.

However, PR in Nigeria faces unique challenges. The practice is often constrained by weak adherence to professional standards, corporate culture, inadequate training, and interference from external forces such as political actors and government agencies (Igben & Ugbon, 2020; Nyitse, et al., 2023; Ahmed et al., 2024). Furthermore, in Africa and Nigeria by extension, PR practitioners are frequently relegated to operational roles, such as media liaison or event management, rather than being integrated into strategic decision-making processes (Nhedzi, & Azionya, 2022).

This limits the strategic potential of PR in addressing critical societal issues, including ethical governance, corporate accountability, and sustainable development. Furthermore, the Nigerian PR setting is largely influenced and characterized by socio-economic, political and ethnic disparities, of which PR practitioners must navigate the complex communication dynamics to reflect these realities (Adams et al., 2023). This necessitates a localized approach to PR that is responsive to Nigeria's unique challenges while aligning with global best practices.

For instance, with over 500 radio and television station in the country, the need to keep core audience informed and keeping the organization afloat sees many media outfit in Nigeria resort to sending journalist and by extension PR practitioners to fish for information thereby exposing them to vice like this (Aluko-Olokun, 2023). Similarly, in Nigeria the most active PR practitioners and journalists in the field are often freelance agents who focus on securing advertisement placements, planting news and features to

maintain their relevance, while also managing celebrities and providing consultancy services for banks and politicians (Olasoji, 2023).

Thus, from a critical perspective, the assumption that practices like paid news, brown envelopes, Guanxi, and other culturally embedded PR tactics are merely "tokens of appreciation" reflects a normalization of unethical behavior within certain domains of public relations. While these practices may be rationalized as necessary for maintaining business operations, such justifications obscure the broader ethical implications and undermine the integrity of the profession. However, by framing these tactics as indispensable, practitioners risk perpetuating a culture where ethical boundaries are blurred, ultimately eroding trust and professionalism in public relations in the perception of the Westernized precept of PR practice (Mandela, 2024).

Consequently, the expectation is that PR professionals in Nigeria should be actively engaged in creating brand strategy and company messaging rather than they are still acting as mere mouthpieces of their organization with little involvement and responsibility in crafting stories for their respective entities. Therefore, re-conceptualizing PR in Nigeria requires redefinition of role beyond operational functions to a strategic discipline that contributes meaningfully to national development.

In turn, the redefinition emphasizes on robust education, training, ethical enforcement, and professional accreditation as critical components for elevating the profession in Nigeria. While PR practice in Nigeria dates back to the colonial era, it is primarily driven by government efforts to manage public opinion and promote policies (Nwodu & Emechebe, 2023). Over the decades, PR has expanded to the private and non-governmental sectors, becoming a critical tool for managing public perception and fostering relationships. However, its evolution has been slow and inconsistent compared to global advancements, primarily due to systemic inadequacies in education, training, and regulation (Aja et al 2019).

The attainment of Nigeria's independence in 1960 and the Civil War from 1966 to 1970 significantly spurred public relations activities in the country. To foster reconciliation, accountability, and a positive national image, the military government established the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in 1990, tasked with regulating and standardizing PR practice (Udomisor & Osademe, 2013). Despite this effort, PR in Nigeria is still largely perceived as a trade rather than a profession, with many practitioners lacking the skills, specialization, and training required to meet contemporary demands. Historically, Nigerian PR evolved through distinct phases: the Public Enlightenment Era (1859–1930s), Broadcasting Era (1930s), Political Propaganda Era (1930s–1940s), Public Information Era (1945–1960s), and the Professionalized Era (1960s–2000s) (Otubanjo, et al., 2013; Ubwa, 2014).

Conversely, the practice in the field has continued to decline and is marked by low standards and poor recognition of PR's strategic relevance (Amujo, & Melewar, 2011). Thus, the role and function of PR practitioners in Nigeria are often restricted by organizational policies and systemic issues. As Role theory in PR indicates, practitioners'

actions and inactions replicate the exact responsibilities of the profession, thereby underlining the need for standardized practices (Şeşen, 2015).

For public relations to be effective in Nigeria and in line with best practices, the practice must be anchored on sound educational training, enforcement of codes, and strict adherence to ethical principles. Although some scholars argue that accreditation and regulation are essential in maintaining standards, this is largely prevalent in developed societies where self-regulation ensures that professional ethics are upheld (Page et al., 2024). However, in developing countries like Nigeria, enforcement mechanisms are necessary to check unprofessional practices and ensure that the field evolves towards global benchmarks.

Issues and Challenges of PR Profession in Nigeria

The advent of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and globalization has significantly transformed PR, enabling real-time communication through digital platforms and expanding its reach and influence (Pepple et al., 2020). These developments have elevated PR's role in fostering trust and driving organizational success (Bhargava, 2024).

However, in Nigeria, PR remains largely focused on basic information dissemination with minimal adherence to structured principles (Iyinoluwa et al 2023). The lack of specialization, standardization, and proper curricular frameworks for PR education in higher institutions is a systematic gap that has left the profession open to unqualified individuals, undermining its credibility and effectiveness.

Public relations practitioners in Nigeria are often relegated to the role of information propagators, with little influence on managerial decisions or organizational strategy. Effective PR demands involvement in decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and strategic guidance (Olaoluwa 2021). Yet, in many Nigerian organizations particularly government agencies, untrained individuals are appointed to communication roles thereby limiting PR's scope to acting on the directives of top management without meaningful input (Achor, & Okoye, 2015). This exclusion reduces practitioners to mere technicians, diminishing their ability to influence corporate policies or effectively manage stakeholder relationships (Agu, et al., 2022).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in Nigeria further reflect this weakness, as projects are often imposed on communities without consultation, a consequence of engaging unqualified practitioners (Morris, 2022). Political appointments to key communication roles also undermine professional standards, resulting in PR strategies that prioritize political agendas over stakeholder needs (Ukonu, et al., 2018). Such systemic issues highlight the critical importance of source credibility and practitioner competence, particularly in crisis management. Credibility in public relations is rooted in trustworthiness, expertise, and timely communication which is essential for effective crisis responses (Dominic, et al., 2023).

In Nigeria, however, weak ethical standards and inadequate training often erode PR credibility, leading to poor outcomes in crisis situations (Zimal, & Aysar, 2021).

Addressing systemic gaps in education, accreditation, and ethical enforcement is crucial to enhancing PR roles and practice in Nigeria. Consequently, re-conceptualizing the profession within a structured framework can develop a cadre of skilled and accountable practitioners capable of driving organizational success and managing crises with professionalism as well as comply with global acceptable standards of the profession.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Perspectives on the Historical Development of Public Relations

The origins of public relations have long been debated among scholars, though most agree that modern PR emerged in the late 19th century (Rodríguez-Salcedo, & Watson, 2021). While American theories and practices have significantly influenced the field (Gezgin, 2019), but scholars like Etang (2015) & Fawkes (2018); argue that PR is not solely an American invention. Thus, Mandela, (2024) further highlights that PR's meaning and practice vary across cultural contexts, reflecting the evolving roles of PR in today's society.

In similar vein, PR's roots have been traced to organized publicity efforts and press agency, (Grunig, & Kim, 2021; Setoutah et al., 2024), however Fawkes, (2018) point out that discrepancies between historical interpretations and established theories, complicating PR's periodization. Communication actions akin to PR have been observed in politics, business, management and administration long before the establishment of press agencies and term public relations activities emerged (Edwards, 2018).

However, the evolution of public relations across continents reveals unique trajectories shaped by cultural, political, and socio-economic contexts. In the Americas, PR's formalization began in the late 19th century, influenced by figures like Ivy Lee and Edward L. Bernays, who established PR as a strategic communication tool (Penning, 2008). Lee emphasized open communication to rebuild public trust, while Bernays introduced research-driven practices to shape public opinion, cementing PR as a professional management function (Zoch, et al., 2014). These foundations aligned with America's industrial growth and democratic ideals, embedding PR into organizational strategies.

Similarly, Europe developed PR through a distinct lens, emphasizing societal engagement over organizational goals. Early European PR critiques highlighted societal tensions, and post-World War II reconstruction further accelerated the profession's growth (Milburn, 2021). The UK, for instance, saw significant advancements with the establishment of the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) in 1948, while European PR evolved through reciprocal exchanges with American practices but retained its socially oriented focus (Anthony, 2018).

In Africa, media and by extension public relations developed within the colonial framework, serving initially as a propaganda tool for colonial administrations (Anani-Bossman, & Tandoh, 2023). With the rise of independence movements, PR transitioned into a mechanism for nation-building and cultural identity promotion. Nigeria and South

Africa emerged as regional leaders, with Nigeria establishing the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) in the 1960s to promote ethical practices (Iyinoluwa et al., 2023).

However, challenges like weak regulatory frameworks and the dominance of Western models persist, necessitating greater cultural contextualization. Similarly, in Asia, PR evolved through a blend of indigenous traditions and external influences. Countries like China, Japan, Malaysia, and Singapore adopted hybrid models combining local norms with Western practices (Sriramesh, & Takasaki, 1999; Sriramesh, 2007; Edwards, & Hodges, 2011).

China's PR formalized during its economic reform era in the 1970s, while Japan's professionalization was shaped by wartime propaganda and the establishment of the IPR in 1948 (Chen et al., 2020). Despite advancements, Asia still grapples with the challenge of aligning Western models with its unique cultural frameworks (Hou et al., 2013; Dühring, & Zerfass, 2015; Domm, 2015).

Globally, the development of PR underscores the importance of contextualizing practices to reflect diverse cultural and economic realities. While Western theories have significantly influenced the field, regions like Africa and Asia have adapted these frameworks to align with their distinct societal norms. This diversity highlights the evolving nature of PR as both a strategic management function and a tool for fostering meaningful stakeholder engagement across different historical and cultural contexts (Mandela, 2024).

Roles of Public Relations

Public relations (PR) roles have undergone extensive scrutiny and evolution over the years. Broom and Smith (1979) initially identified five major roles for PR professionals: technical services provider, expert prescriber, communication process facilitator, problem-solving facilitator, and acceptant legitimizer. Broom (1982) later refined these into four key roles, distinguishing between managerial and technical functions. According to Dozier and Broom (1995), the technician role emphasizes the artistic and operational aspects of communication, such as crafting messages, writing, and managing media relations. Conversely, the managerial role is strategically oriented, focusing on diagnosing organizational challenges and developing solutions to meet stakeholder needs (Grunig, 2020).

In a similar vein, Sesen (2015) further expounded on these roles by adding the dual responsibility of the modern PR practitioner in nurturing relations with both the internal and external audience while devising strategies that connect with the social, cultural, and structural arrangement of an organization. This, therefore, highlights the increasing complexity of PR in the digital era, where access to social media has brought new dimensions to the practice. While many of these are responsibilities with which the contemporary role is familiar as it is communicative in nature, however Oparaugo (2021) suggests that PR roles must cater for the distinct needs of internal and external publics.

Over the years, Public Relations has evolved from a purely communications function to a wider organizational role of advising, developing strategies, and connecting

communication initiatives with overall organizational goals. As such, PR roles, according to Neill and Lee (2021), must not be restricted to just fulfilling routine operation task but also contribute to the strategic positioning of an organization and connecting the performance of such roles to the effectiveness of an organization.

Regardless of these advancements, there are still significant challenges to understanding and integrating PR roles within varied cultural contexts. For example, in countries such as Nigeria, PR is often narrowly limited to the dissemination of information. In addition, government influence and political interference has done much to shape the scope and impact of PR practice, thus bringing to light the need for a more adaptive and context-sensitive approach (Olaoluwa, 2021).

Examination of The Role Theory in Public Relations

Role theory in public relations (PR) offers a framework for understanding the varied and evolving functions that PR practitioners perform within organizations and societies (Ibrahim, et al., 2021). It focuses on the expectations, behaviors, and responsibilities associated with the roles that PR professionals occupy (Cornelissen, 2023). Initially grounded in sociology, role theory posits that individuals within an organization or society take on specific roles based on societal expectations, organizational needs, and professional standards (Sesen, 2015).

In the context of public relations, role theory helps to explain the complex relationship between the PR practitioner and the various stakeholders, including the organization, the public, and the media. However, the theory has undergone significant development since its inception, with scholars refining it to accommodate the changing nature of PR in response to social, technological, and organizational shifts (Laskin, 2012).

The difference between managerial and technical roles has played a decisive role in determining role theory in public relations. Both traditional and modern scholars in the field underline the importance of balancing these roles to achieve maximum effectiveness (Rabrenović, 2020). While the technical role is important for executing communication strategies, it often restricts PR's impact within organizations, as it is typically viewed as a supporting function rather than a core strategic contributor. On the other hand, the managerial role positions PR as a critical element in organizational decision-making, influencing both internal and external communication strategies, policy formulation, and crisis management (Krishnan, & Ahmad, 2021).

Scholars like Sampa, (2022) argue that while both roles are important however, the managerial role should dominate the PR profession, as it aligns with the need for PR to contribute to organizational goals, strategic communication, and relationship management. However, this division of roles into technician and managerial perspectives has been critiqued for oversimplifying the complex nature of PR roles (Gaara et al., 2024). This is because the reality of PR practice is not always confined to a dichotomy between managerial and technical functions. And as such, this is perhaps why practitioners must navigate both roles simultaneously, with strategic decision-making intertwined with tactical execution.

As Stojanović et al (2020) note, the role expectation of PR practitioners is shaped by both organizational goals and the external environment, which requires them to adapt their roles depending on the situation. For example, in crisis communication, PR professionals may switch from a strategic managerial role to a more technical role focused on message dissemination and media management (Babatunde, 2022).

Although Sesen (2015) added the dual task of managing relationships with external stakeholders and cultivating strong internal communications reflects the growing importance of internal communication for organizational effectiveness. However, the incorporation of social, cultural, and environmental factors that influence PR roles, highlighting the necessity for PR practitioners to tailor their strategies to the specific context in which they operate. And the rise of digital and social media has further transformed the roles of PR practitioners (Pribadi & Nasution, 2021). Given that traditionally, PR was heavily reliant on traditional media channels such as newspapers, television, and radio, however the advent of social media and digital platforms has introduced new opportunities and challenges for PR professionals (Udomah et al., 2023).

In that sense, with increased responsibility for managing online reputations, engaging with influencers, and creating content to engage varied audiences on numerous platforms, PR professionals are expected to do more than just communicate. But the challenge anchors on how to balance the technical and managerial dimensions of PR within this new paradigm. Incidentally, the technical component of social media management is very important, but it must be complemented with a strategic approach whereby practitioners using digital platforms do so in the interest of achieving larger organizational objectives like brand building, crisis management, and effective stakeholder engagement.

METHODOLOGY

As asserted by Jaakkola (2020), the methodological basis of conceptual papers lies in synthesizing and integrating evidence from pre-existing concepts, theories, and scholarship rather than conventional analysis of empirical data. This paper's conceptual model, therefore, draws from a narrative review as its core methodology, leveraging the strength of this approach in discussing systemic problems within PR practice in Nigeria. While conceptual papers do not intricately include new empirical data, they build upon theories and concepts which have been developed and tested through prior empirical research (Lindgreen et al., 2021).

This paper follows Jaakkola's (2020) framework, which posits that model conceptual designs in conceptual research aim to develop frameworks that predict relationships between concepts, describe entities, or identify key issues relevant to explaining a phenomenon. Similarly, Heinonen and Gruen (2024) emphasize that model conceptual designs clarify and explain events, objects, or processes by identifying antecedents, outcomes, and contingencies associated with the focal construct. Thus, the use of a model conceptual design in this study provides a structured approach to re-conceptualizing PR practices in Nigeria. It ensures that the argumentation is

systematically developed, addressing critical aspects of PR practice rather than limiting itself to abstract conceptual contributions.

The integrative methodology of narrative literature review further strengthens the conceptions of this paper in the sense that it enables the exploration of available research on PR practice in Nigeria and provide an extensive synthesis of current knowledge. Thus, this synthesis provides a foundation for the proposed framework. According to Byrne (2016), narrative reviews aid critical reflection and interpretation of past or existing research with the aim of ascertaining gaps in research or practice which is what the conceptual framework sought to address. The implication of the integrative narrative methodology is that it makes the proposed framework relevant and necessary relative to PR in Nigeria. Unlike systematic reviews, which follows rigid methodological protocols, narrative literature reviews are more flexible and interpretive, allowing for a discursive approach to analyzing diverse insights (Sukhera, 2022).

Thus, the flexibility of integrative literature approach is important for providing contextualization and integration of sets of views which makes the narrative reviews particularly suitable for the advancement of conceptual arguments. The integration of scholarship is thus key in the development of comprehensive framework towards addressing systemic challenges to PR practice in Nigeria. It therefore provides a clear view of the state of PR practice in the country and lays a firm foundation for the proposed framework. A significant portion of the integration is identifying the knowledge gaps. The review points out areas that were previously unexplored or under-explored in prevailing theories and applications in the Nigeria setting, such as the influence of modern communication technologies and political pressures on PR practices, that have been overlooked by past studies in favour of narrower challenges like cultural limitations and media engagement.

In like manner, the narrative approach deployed in this paper therefore deepened the understanding of paradigm shift in PR theory and practice evolution relevant to the inimitable context of Nigeria. The integrative review draws from both Western and African perspectives to ensure that the study does not simply duplicate existing knowledge but rather engages the knowledge towards uncovering and proposing valuable contribution of knowledge to the field. This integration is critical in laying out a clearer picture of PR practice in Nigeria and the theoretical bases underpinning the proposed framework and broad applicability and challenges practitioners face in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the integrative review adopted in this paper provides the basis for grounding the proposed framework within existing knowledge while also creating avenues of engagement complex issues that influence PR practice in Nigeria. A conceptual design, according to MacInnis (2011), provides a roadmap to understand the subject matter in which key concepts are delineated and their processes described, with identified mitigating factors that influence their operation. In the context of this study, this approach underpins the effort to develop a framework that methodically addresses

the systemic challenges affecting PR practice in Nigeria, hence giving a coherent and actionable blueprint for re-conceptualization.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Role theory in PR underlines the increasing complexity and strategic relevance of PR in modern organizations. Early frameworks distinguished PR roles into two categories: technicians, responsible for tactical execution, and managers, focused on strategic control. However, modern-day expectations and interpretations of these roles according to Sesen (2015) are fluid and intertwined in practice to include legal (ethical), social, and economic responsibilities thus making them key drivers for organizational excellence. The rise of digital and social media offers new dimensions to the profession of public relations, while also requiring and demanding practitioners to be more versatile and adaptive. Consequently, knowledge of the intricate nature of PR roles, along with understanding their contextual use and needs certainly make PR practitioners instrumental in negotiating today's communication milieu.

Equally, Excellence theory supports the integration of two-way symmetrical communication, strategic management, and PR's involvement in organizational decision-making (Hung-Baesecke et al., 2021). Excellence approach, just like the role model, represents a fundamental shift from one-way information dissemination to facilitating meaningful engagement between organizations and stakeholders. On the premise of well-defined role and excellence in performance, the framework confronts the systemic problems identified as poor educational training, unethical practices, weak professional standards, poor enforcement of code and standards of practices and PR practices that is media driven. The reconceptualization of PR roles encourages expertise in communication, stakeholder engagement, and ethical conduct in manners that enhance the credibility and effectiveness of PR in the complex socio-political environment of Nigeria.

Competence cannot be divorced from PR roles and excellence in PR. It is, therefore, expected that the professionalization of PR in Nigeria must start with comprehensive education as a bedrock for competence in modern-day PR practice. There is, therefore, an imperative need for reforms in updating PR curricula in higher institutions to ensure that modern PR tools are integrated, standards are globally aligned, and sensitive to local needs. However, Scholars such as Hayes et al., (2023); Kinnear and Bowman, (2024) attribute weak ties between theory and practice to the disconnect between PR practitioners and academics. Contextual variations, on the other hand, further question the universality of the theories of PR thus calling for specialized education to bridge these gaps (Muswede, & Lubinga, 2018; Abdullah et al., 2023. And this is probably why the need for educational reforms in PR in Nigeria is more crucial than ever.

Presently, in Nigeria, PR practitioners enter the field through various routes such as journalism, political science, management, marketing, business, administration, and social sciences. Training schemes such as the master's program offered by the Nigerian

Institute of Public Relations attempts to give the necessary introductory knowledge to practitioner without PR background, but the program lack the depth needed for contemporary PR practice. For instance, a six months NIPR program cannot replace a three-year or four-years university education. This paper, therefore, proposes a framework of education, training and professional accreditation to provide a benchmark for PR practice in Nigeria.

On a global scale, PR practitioners generally do not have to obtain formal licenses to practice (Page et al., 2024). Instead, regulatory oversight is usually provided through accreditation bodies and schemes operated by national PR associations. The challenge with such regulatory bodies and mechanisms is that most are voluntary, thereby limiting their enforceability and recognition as standardized regulatory frameworks in that regard (Olaoluwa, 2021). For instance, in developing countries such as Nigeria, political influence greatly reduces the independence of regulatory agencies such as the NIPR and presents a major barrier to the implementation of the ethical codes and the upholding of professional standards. Although the law of NIPR states that all practitioners must register with the body before practicing, but there are people still practice without registering, hence questioning the institute's efficiency. More important, public complaints and reports against ethical violations seldom come out into the open, and the lack of any significant precedents undermines the credibility and strength of the regulatory framework governing the profession.

In other words, for professionalism of PR practice in Nigeria to be effective, an independent supervisory body is required. Although independent but must collaborate with NIPR to enforce ethical codes and its bylaws. The body must be saddled with ensuring compliance with the code to raise standards of PR practice in the country. Therefore, the re-conceptualization of PR practice in Nigeria aims to solve the systemic challenges that impede professionalization of the profession. Drawing from Sesen's (2015) description of public relations as a dynamic, interdependent relationship with legal, social, and economic responsibilities that must be undertaken by practitioners to achieve organizational excellence. This paper makes a case re-conceptualization of PR and professionalization in the industry.

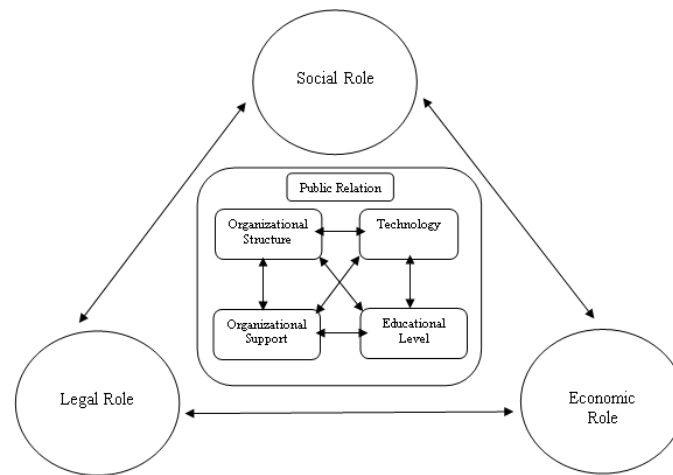


Figure 1: Model for Role Theory in Public Relations (Sesen, 2015)

On the premise of systemic challenge as hindrance to the roles of public relations and by extension its PR practitioners in the practice of PR in Nigeria, this paper proposes framework geared at addressing these systemic challenges. The basis for re-conceptualizing public relations in Nigeria is geared as professionalization of PR profession in Nigeria. The study proposes a framework emphasizing education, accreditation, and certification as prerequisites for professional practice:

1. Education: Ensures competence by equipping aspiring PR professionals with theoretical knowledge and practical skills.
2. Accreditation: Validates membership and eligibility through rigorous professional assessments.
3. Certification: Establishes the autonomy of regulatory bodies like NIPR, enforcing adherence to ethical codes and professional standards as well as holding practitioners accountable.

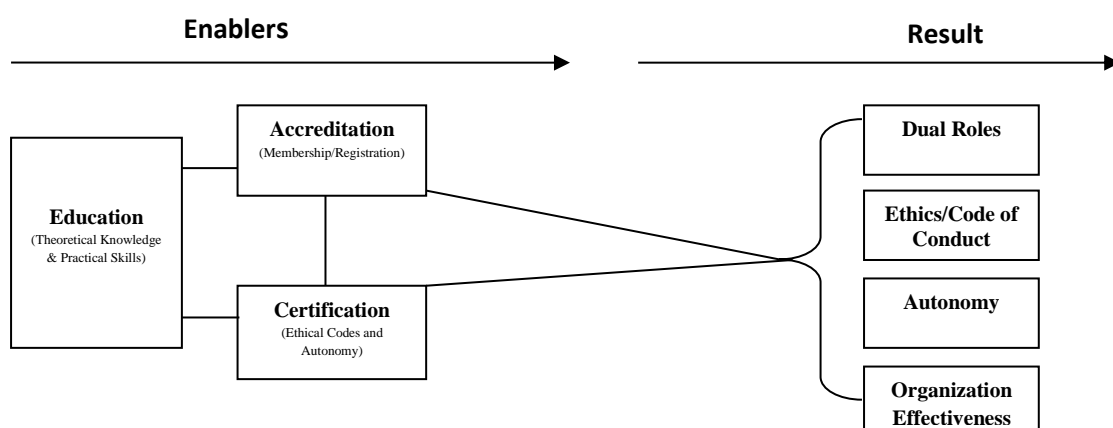


Figure 2: Tripartite Framework for Professionalization of PR Practice in Nigeria (Framework Proposed by Author, 2024).

The above tripartite framework proposed for the professionalization of PR practice in Nigeria rests on three critical pillars, namely: Education, Accreditation, and Certification. This framework presents a stepwise means of raising standards, ensuring ethical adherence, and advancing organizational and professional excellence in PR. Education provides the foundation for professionalism, equipping PR practitioner with theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed in practice. It sets the base level of competencies necessary to navigate the changing demands of the profession.

Education is followed by accreditation, which affirms professional validity through strenuous professional assessment. It ensures that practitioners are up to the established standards that gives them membership and eligibility in the professional community. Membership, through registration with NIPR chapters, serves as an indicator of credibility and acceptance, somewhat like a professional badge of honor. Certification seals accountability and ensures compliance with codes of ethics without compromising the independence of the regulatory body. Certification reinforces the ethical standards of the profession and holds practitioners accountable for their actions, thus upholding the integrity of the profession. Together, these enablers result in the standardization and professionalization of PR practice. The outcomes are such that practitioners demonstrate competency and adherence to ethical codes, dual role proficiency-strategic and technician to boost organizational effectiveness. The framework also provides for independence and autonomy of NIPR for sustainability and credibility of the regulatory environment for public relations practice in Nigeria.

The tripartite approach toward professionalization proposed for PR practice in Nigeria enables quality and competent practitioners, accepted standards of operations, promote ethical practices that enhances organization values. Conversely, the tripartite model equally enhances credibility and effectiveness of PR across a complex socio-economic, cultural, and political milieu such as Nigeria. In addition, the tripartite framework for the professionalization of PR practice in Nigeria will facilitate greater autonomy of NIPR as the regulatory body of the profession in the country because the efficiency of NIPR as an accrediting and regulatory body is seriously challenged. This is mainly due to political interferences in the operationalization of its status, thus making it weak in its abilities to ensure compliance and enforcement. For instance, while registration with NIPR is a requirement for PR practitioners and organizations, many are still not registered including government agencies and department, and this defeats the institute's authority to have offenders penalized as asserted in NIPR's regulations. Hence, the autonomy of NIPR is highly instrumental in reinstating its integrity so that it can undertake the implementation of its mandate without any interference by outside forces. In this regard, the paper recommends the following:

1. Mandatory accreditation (licensing) of all practitioners
2. Autonomy and Non- politicization of NIPR
3. National database for accreditation (registered) practitioners.

4. Establishment of independent ethics committee with the NIPR body to monitor and enforce code of ethics and standards of best practices.
5. Engagement of trained practitioners by government and politicians alike.
6. Greater involvement of practitioners in the organizational decision-making process.

Evidently, Nwakanma (2013) observes that less than 10% of 350 Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) in Nigeria deploy formally registered PR practitioners. Likewise, Iyinoluwa et al., (2023) affirmed lack of engagement of trained practitioners by the government has led to increase in the number of unqualified practitioners merely laundering image of corrupt politicians and government officials. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2024) noted that while the federal ministry of education employs public relations strategies to promote inclusive education for individuals with special needs, their efforts are minimal, resulting in limited success. The limited success rather than the substantial impact is due to underutilization of PR and by extension practitioners and the lack of autonomy of NIPR to checkmate these violations.

The proposed tripartite framework for PR professionalization in Nigeria comprising education, accreditation, and certification offers significant practical applications is not only within the Nigerian context but also extend to other regions, particularly in developing countries. As such, the implementation of this framework can be extended and adapted to other regions, where socio-political, economic, and cultural factors complicate PR practices.

Focusing on the educational component of the framework, emanates from the lack of standardized education and the prevalence of unqualified practitioners which hinder the growth and credibility of the PR profession. Thus, creating specialized and accredited academic programs to upgrade existing ones offers a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Universities and training institutions must develop comprehensive curricula that focus on PR theories alongside hands-on training to better prepare students to tackle unique challenges in the Nigerian context. This educational framework also holds global relevance, as many developing countries face similar issues of inadequate or substandard PR education.

A prime example of poor PR education is prevalent across much of Africa, parts of Asia, and Latin American nations. This provides avenues to make unqualified practitioners proliferate in the field and practice. This shortcoming is accentuated by Anani-Bossman and Tandoh (2023) who noted minimal corpus of knowledge on the African perspective of the practice, culminating into the saturation of field and profession with PR theories and models originating predominantly from a Western perspective.

On the same note, running of educational programs is thus one of the major challenges before national PR bodies like NIPR of Nigeria. The establishment of specialized PR programs is further made complex by economic factors in developing nations. In addressing such constraints, there is, therefore, a need for international

collaboration, e-learning platforms, and public-private partnership cooperations to make these measures available and accessible at an affordable price.

Furthermore, the accreditation element of the model has international potential, particularly through collaborations with international PR bodies such as the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management. This could be through mutual recognition agreements whereby PR practitioners would obtain international standing and contribute to international standardization. In countries with significant government interference or where authoritarian regimes are in place, partnerships (cooperations) is necessary to protect the independence of regulatory bodies while also taking into consideration political realities (balancing political realities) so that the integrity of the profession is upheld.

Similarly, the certification aspect of the framework focuses on standards and ethics which vital in a country like Nigeria where the industry has been marred by corruption and unethical practices in the profession. Globally accepted standards must be applied but keeping in mind cultural considerations because what may be deemed ethical or unethical differs from region to region. For example, the relationship between PR practitioners and government bodies can vary greatly in regions with strong political control or limited media freedom, thus making standards relevant and effective in particular contexts. Consequently, in regions prone to government interference a case for regulatory independence must be done through tactful negotiation with political stakeholders so that the need for autonomy is balanced with the socio-political realities of the region or state. It is for this reason that the successful application of the framework on a global scale depends on flexibility considering cultural, economic, and political differences to ensure its relevance and adaptability across diverse settings.

Case in point, the ongoing issue of non-qualified individuals being appointed as spokespersons by security agencies, in Nigeria as highlighted by the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR). Despite existing laws that criminalize the appointment of untrained PR practitioners, many security agencies continue to appoint non-PR professionals to key communication roles. In response, NIPR is working with the Attorney General's office to criminalize such appointments and is pushing for the regularization of non-certified individuals (Abdulsalam, 2022). However, till date there has been no precedent to this effect. This situation illustrates the need for a robust accreditation system, as proposed in the tripartite framework, to ensure only qualified individuals hold PR positions, enhancing both the credibility and professionalism of the industry.

Thus, for public relations to function as a planned and sustainable effort aimed at fostering goodwill and mutual understanding between organizations and their publics. The Nigerian Institute of Public Relations must operate as an independent body, free from government interference. Also, for public relations to function as a planned and sustainable effort aimed at fostering goodwill and mutual understanding between organizations and their publics, NIPR must operate as an independent body, free from government interference.

A good example is the Public Relations Institute of South Africa-PRISA-which has the power to strike off practitioners who breach its code of conduct or who behave in an unprofessional manner and thus preventing them from practicing (Wöcke et al., 2020). On the other hand, the NIPR does not have a clear framework for punitive action and as such, there is the need for research on how the institute can better perform its regulatory role in terms of disciplining errant members and unqualified practitioners. The study also points out that further research is needed to empirically investigate the implications of inaction by PR practitioners, which would highlight its impact on the standards and credibility of the profession in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Although legislation was put in place to govern the practice of public relations, PR in Nigeria still struggles to gain professional acceptance. The reason for this challenge is largely down to systemic barriers that make it impossible for the PR professionals to perform their jobs effectively. These challenges are heightened by organizational culture, management priorities, and overall socio-political, cultural and economic systems in which practitioners operate. The amount of freedom and autonomy extended to PR professionals in any given society is a major determinant of how well they can carry out their mandates and excel in public relations practices.

It has, therefore, become necessary in Nigeria to have a PR role defined via a structured framework that tackles systemic challenges, standardizes practices, and professionalizes the field of PR. This framework emphasizes key elements such as education, accreditation, and certification to raise the profession to global standards, with cognizance of local realities.

However, the framework may not be applied across the board because of existing socio-economic, political, and cultural variations in various regions of the world. Nevertheless, there are several reasons why this is peculiar to Nigeria. Precisely, lack of funding and resources, especially in underdeveloped territories, has prevented the development of specialized PR programs and accreditation and certification systems that can professionalize PR practice thereby showcasing the economical factor or reasons.

Likewise, cultural resistance could also contribute to difficulties in adopting the framework. This is because of prevalent hierarchical management structures in Nigeria which sees employees and department like PR and communication succumb to pressures from top management. Consequently, this makes practitioners to negotiate and align with corporate politics and agendas which often interfere with the ethical dispositions and self-efficacy of the practitioner. Thus, high power distance culture in Nigeria also subject employees to management objective and goals.

While institutional weaknesses have been identified as hindrance to the practice of PR in Nigeria, particularly inadequate regulatory powers of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations, coupled with deficiencies in its enforcement mechanisms. However, while the framework makes a case for accreditation, certification and autonomy, the

facility of the framework to successfully police its ranks and try quacks reduces could dampen the chances of its success.

In addition, there is also the challenge of reconciling global PR standards with the peculiar socio-political and economic context of Nigeria or developing regions. For example, while it is a standard ethical practice globally in PR not to accept gifts as a way of ensuring integrity, the brown envelope culture in Nigeria where journalists are given gifts or money for publishing a story to favor the giver is an abiding reality. While this is unethical by international standards, it is sometimes seen as a means of survival by media professionals and their media organizations. It follows that international PR standards should be applied cautiously in view of local practices that have been cultivated and engraved into the socio-economic fabric of a region or state (informally) or within the media landscape of a given society. Therefore, a balanced approach is relevant in the call for global ethical standards, taking into consideration local challenges so that the framework can be effective and contextually relevant.

The implications of role non-performance are enormous which may take the form of damage to organizational reputation, damage to organizations, loss of stakeholder trust, missed opportunities for effective communication, dwelling business and financial losses. These setbacks not only affect individual organizations but also undermine the credibility of the PR professionals and by extension the PR profession. It is, therefore, imperative that these challenges be addressed through a comprehensive and actionable framework if the PR industry in Nigeria is to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the success of organizations and societal development.

BIODATA

Nsini Anselem Eyo, Ph.D. is the Founder and Managing Director of Selem Consults, a public relations firm based in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Public Relations from HELP University College, Malaysia (2011), a Master's degree in Corporate Communication from Universiti Putra Malaysia (2016), and a Ph.D. in Mass Communication from Universiti Putra Malaysia (2021). Dr. Eyo is actively engaged in research on public relations, organizational communication, and intercultural communication across various settings, while also seeking collaborative opportunities in these fields.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, Z., Mohamad, B., Raza, S. H., & Hasan, N. A. (2023). Reframing A Global Public Relations Practice: Identifying Global Capability Framework from Asian Perspective. *Public Relations Review*, 49(4), 102359. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2023.102359>
- Achor, P. N., & Okoye, V. U. (2015). Status Of Government Public Relations (GPR) in Nigeria and Its Institutionalization in Governance. *International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)*, 4(3),1643-1650. <https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v4i3/SUB152166.pdf>
- Adams, E. J., Ofordi, J. A., Ahmad, R., & Eneje, G. C. (2023). Public Relations and Promotion of Socio-Political Inclusiveness in Nigeria. *Ebonyi State University Journal of Mass Communication*, 10(1), 80-92. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378677691_Public_Relations_and_Promotion_of_Socio-Political_Inclusiveness_in_Nigeria
- Adamu, M. A., & Auwal, A. (2023). Globalized: The Imperativeness of Intercultural Competence for International Public Relations Practices. *Kashere Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 1(1).137-144. <https://journals.fukashere.edu.ng/index.php/kjpir/article/view/95/87>
- Agu, E., Adeola, O., Ibelegbu, O., Esho, E. (2022). Public Relations in Africa's Public Sector: A Crisis Situational Analysis of South Africa and Nigeria. In: Adeola, O., Katuse, P., Kakra Twum, K. (eds) *Public Sector Marketing Communications Volume I*. Palgrave Studies of Public Sector Management in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-07293-2_7
- Ahmed, M. S., Rabi, M. S., & Igyuve, A. T. (2024) Evaluating Public Relations Strategies of Ministry of Education on Inclusive Education for People with Special Needs in Select States of Nigeria. *International Journal of Information, Technology & Innovation in Africa*,12(7), 65-84. <https://www.arcnjournals.org/images/6732-0-183-066-35-1277.pdf>
- Aja, U. S., Chukwu, J. N., Odoh, V. O. (2019) Professionalizing Public Relations Practice in Nigeria: The Role of Nigeria Institute of Public Relations. *South-East Journal of Public Relations*, 2(1), 124- 133. https://www.sejpr.net/uploads/584091_1635762031.pdf
- Alper, D. Ö. (2024). Public relations discourse on X (Twitter) and analysis of public relations. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 3(1), 14-26. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105003120242>
- Aluko-Olokun, A. (2023, February 14th) Nigerian Democratic Report: With 740 Functional Broadcast Stations in Nigeria, Industry Craves for Reforms. Retrieved from, <https://www.ndr.org.ng/with-740-functional-broadcast-stations-in-nigeria-industry-craves-for-reforms/#:~:Text=With%20740%20functional%20broadcast%20stations,for%20reforms%20%E2%80%93%20Nigerian%20Democratic%20Report.>

- Al-Yaqoub, R. A., Abd Rahman, N. A., Mat-Saad, M. Z. (2019). Antecedent Factors That Influence on The Practice of The Online PR Concept Among Practitioners. *Journal Of Advanced Research in Dynamical and Control Systems*, 1(08), 172-176. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343163195_Antecedent_Factors_that_influence_on_the_practice_of_the_online_pr_concept_among_practitioners
- Amujo, O. C., & Melewar, T. C. (2011). Contemporary Challenges Impacting on The Practice of Public Relations in Nigeria (1990-2011). *Prism Journal*, 6(3),1-20. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1441442
- Anani-Bossmann, A., & Tandoh, I. (2022). Towards a framework for public relations scholarship and practice in Africa: A globalisation perspective. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 28(1), 48-67. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ccij-06-2021-0064>
- Anthony, S. (2018). Public Relations and The Making of Modern Britain: Stephen Talents and The Birth of a Progressive Media Profession. In *Public Relations and The Making of Modern Britain*. Manchester University Press.
- Babatunde, K. A. (2022). Public relations and social media for effective crisis communication management. *Jurnal Bina Praja*, 14(3), 543-553. <https://doi.org/10.21787/jbp.14.2022.543-553>
- Bhargava, A. (2024, July 25). *Revolutionizing Public Relations: The Impact of Technology — Global Alliance*. *Global Alliance*. <https://www.globalalliancepr.org/thoughts/2024/5/16/revolutionizing-public-relations-the-impact-of-technology>
- Broom, G. M., & Smith, G. D. (1979). Testing the Practitioner's Impact on Clients. *Public Relations Review*, 5(3), 47-59. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0363-8111\(79\)80027-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0363-8111(79)80027-2)
- Broom, G. M. (1982). A Comparison of Sex Roles in Public Relations. *Public Relations Review*, 8(3), 17-22. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0363-8111\(82\)80028-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0363-8111(82)80028-3)
- Byrne, J.A. (2016). Improving The Peer Review of Narrative Literature Reviews. *Research Integrity and Peer Review* 1(12). 1-4. [Doi.Org/10.1186/S41073-016-0019-2](https://doi.org/10.1186/S41073-016-0019-2)
- Chaidaroon, S. & Hou, Z. (2021). Global Public Relations: Multi-paradigmatic Perspectives, Key Approaches and Future Directions. In C. Valentini (Ed.). *Handbooks Of Communication Science: Public Relations* (Pp. 399-414). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton: [Doi.Org/10.1515/9783110554250-020](https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110554250-020)
- Chen, X., Hung-Baesecke, C. F., & Chen, Y. R. (2020). Constructing Positive Public Relations in China: Integrating Public Relations Dimensions, Dialogic Theory of Public Relations and the Chinese Philosophical Thinking of Yin and Yang. *Public Relations Review*, 46(1), 101770. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.04.004>
- Cornelissen, J. P. (2023). *Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. Sage Publication London.
- Dalton, R. (2022). *Dimensions Of Advantage: How Public Relations Practice in the UK Reveals the Presence and Workings of Selected Accounts of Power* (Doctoral Dissertation, Solent University). Southampton, United Kingdom.

- Dominic, D., E., Mahamed, M., & Uwadiegwu, I. V. (2023). Demystifying Source Credibility (SC) in Social Sciences: An Inescapable Construct towards Effective Communications. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(12). <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v13-i12/19356>
- Domm, G. (2015). *Public Relations Practice in ASEAN Nations: Local, Regional, Global Visions*. (Unpublished Doctoral dissertation). Deakin University at Victoria, Australia.
- Dozier, D. M., & Broom, G. M. (1995). Evolution of the Manager Role in Public Relations Practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 7(1), 3–26. doi:10.1207/s1532754xjpr0701_02
- Dühring, L., & Zerfass, A. (2015). Corporate Communications and Public Relations in Asia: Context, Status Quo, and Future Challenges (No. 7). *Forschungsberichte zur Unternehmens Kommunikation*. Retrieved from <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/113296/1/830055959.pdf>
- Edwards, L. (2018). *Understanding Public Relations: Theory, Culture and Society* (1st Ed.). Sage Publications.
- Edwards, L., & Hodges, C. E. (Eds.). (2011). *Public Relations, Society & Culture: Theoretical and Empirical Explorations*. (1st ed). Taylor & Francis.
- Etang, J. (2015), “What Is Public Relations Historiography? Philosophy Of History, Historiography and Public Relations”, In Watson, T. (Ed.), *Perspectives on Public Relations Historiography and Historical Theorization*, Palgrave, Houndmills, Pp. 69-84
- Fawkes, J. (2018). The Evolution of Public Relations Research—An Overview. *Communication & Society*, 31(4), 159-171. Doi: 10.15581/003.31.4.159-171
- Gaara, A., Kaptein, M., & Berens, G. (2024). It is all in the Name: Toward a Typology of Public Relations Professionals’ Ethical Dilemmas. *Public Relations Review*, 50(1), 102418. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2023.102418>
- Gezgin, U. B. (2019). Critical Public Relations and Cultural Public Relations: Two Theoretical Exits Before the Bridge for The Lopsided, Practice-Focused Public Relations Field. *Global Media Journal: Turkish Edition*, 9(18), 1-23. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333264077_Critical_Public_Relations_and_Cultural_Public_Relations_Two_Theoretical_Exits_before_the_Bridge_for_the_Lopsided_Practice-Focused_Public_Relations_Field
- Grunig, J. E. (2022). Negotiation and Conflict Management: Two Valuable Tools in The Public Relations Toolbox. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, 15(1), 1-5. DOI:10.34891/20220215-542
- Grunig, J. E., & Kim, J.-N. (2021). 15 The Four Models of Public Relations and Their Research Legacy. *Public Relations*, 277–312. Doi:10.1515/9783110554250-015
- Grunig, J.E. And Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing Public Relations*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston Publisher
- Grunig, L. A. (2020). Power in the Public Relations Department. In *Public Relations Research Annual* (pp. 115-156). Routledge.

- Hayes, R. A., Robertson, S. L., & Preston, A. N. (2023). Does Public Relations Scholarship need Better PR? Practitioners' Perspectives on Academic Research. *Public Relations Review*, 49(1), 102273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102273>
- Heinonen, K., Gruen, T. (2024) Elevating Conceptual Research: Insights, Approaches, and Support. *AMS Review* 14, 1–6. doi.org/10.1007/s13162-024-00283-9
- Hou, Z., Zhu, Y., & Bromley, M. (2013). Understanding Public Relations in China: Multiple Logics and Identities. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 27(3), 308-328.
- Hung-Baesecke, C. F. J., Chen, Y. R., & Lan, N. (2021). The Excellence Theory – Origins, Contribution and Critique. In C. Valentini (Ed.), *Public Relations* (pp. 313-334). Berlin:De Gruyter Mouton.
- Ibrahim, M. N. Z., Ahmad Anuar, A. Z., & Abd Hamid, A. S. (2021). The Roles of Public Relations (PR) Practices as Professional Profession In Malaysia. In C. S. Mustaffa, M. K. Ahmad, N. Yusof, M. B. M. H. @. Othman, & N. Tugiman (Eds.), *Breaking the Barriers, Inspiring Tomorrow*, vol 110. *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences* (pp. 128-133). European Publisher. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2021.06.02.17>
- Igben, H. G. (2022). Public Relations Tools for Sustainable Mutual Understanding between Higher Educational Institutions and Their Publics in Nigeria. *British Journal of Marketing Studies*, 10(4), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.37745/bjms.2013/vol10n4116>
- Igben, H. G., & Ugbome, M. (2020) Influence of Corporate Culture on Public Relations Practice in Nigeria. *International Journal of International Relations, Media and Mass Communication Studies*, 6(3), 105-115, <https://ejournals.org/ijirmmcs/vol-6-issue-3-december-2020/influence-of-corporate-culture-on-public-relations-practice-in-nigeria/>
- Iyinoluwa, A. O., Ismail, O. & Emmanuel, I. (2023). A Literature Review of Public Relations Research in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Review* 6(3), 312-344. <https://ijssmr.org/vol-6-issue-3/a-literature-review-of-public-relations-research-in-nigeria/>
- Jaakkola, E. (2020). Designing Conceptual Articles: Four Approaches. *AMS Review*, 10(1), 18-26. doi.org/10.1007/s13162-020-00161-0
- Kinnear, S. L., & Bowman, S. (2023). Recognising a Signature Pedagogy for Public Relations Teaching and Learning in the Last Twenty Years. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 29(1), 79-94. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ccij-01-2023-0002>
- Krishnan, M., & Ahmad, J. (2022). Exploring Beyond Tactical and Managerial Conventions of Public Relations for Organizational Effectiveness. In J. A. Wahab, H. Mustafa, & N. Ismail (Eds.), *Rethinking Communication and Media Studies in the Disruptive Era*, vol 123. *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences* (pp. 68-86). European Publisher. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2022.01.02.6>

- Lamwaka, S. (2022). Towards A News Industry Framework for Tackling the Vice of Brown Envelope Journalism: Perceptions of Journalists and Public Relations Practitioners in Uganda (Unpublished Master's Thesis). Aga Khan University. Pakistan.
- Laskin, A. V. (2012). *Journal of Communication Management*, 16(4), 355-370. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13632541211278996>
- Lindgreen, A., Di Benedetto, C. A., Brodie, R. J., & Jaakkola, E. (2021). How to Develop Great Conceptual Frameworks for Business-to-Business Marketing. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 94, A2-A10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2020.04.005>
- Macinnis, D. J. (2011). A Framework for Conceptual Contributions in Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(4), 136-154. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.75.4.136>.
- Mandela, K. (2024) Influence of Cultural Differences on Global PR Campaigns. *Journal of Public Relations* 3(1):52-63 Doi:10.47941/Jpr.1775
- Milburn, K. (2021). Unmasked: Public Relations' Struggle for Legitimacy in Post-World War II West Germany (Doctoral Dissertation, Swinburne). Melbourne, Australia.
- Morris, K. (2022). Corporate Sustainability And Social Responsibility (CSSR): A Critical View Of Multinational Corporations' Communication And Public Relations Practices In A Postcolonial Setting (Doctoral Dissertation, University Of The Sunshine Coast, Queensland). Australia
- Muswede, T., & Lubinga, E. (2018). Global Media Hegemony and the Transformation Bliss in Post-colonial Africa-real Independence or Change of Masters? *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 10(2), 82-96. <https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC-fa98d9040>
- Neill, M. S. (2020). Public Relations Professionals Identify Ethical Issues, Essential Competencies and Deficiencies. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 36(1), 51-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1846539>
- Nhedzi, A., & Azionya, C. M. (2022). The Limited Role of African Strategic Communication Practitioners in Ethical Communication Practices. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 28(7), 68-83. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ccij-10-2021-0115>
- Nwakanma C. B. (2013, May 9th) Current Trends and Challenges of Public Relations Consulting in Nigeria, 1st All Africa Public Relations and Strategic Communication Summit, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Nwodu, G. E., & Emechebe, C. N. (2023). Dominant Coalition, Public Relations and Power Relations Dynamics in Ministries, Departments, And Agencies in Nigeria. In *Communication, Media and Power Relations in A Multicultural Society: Context, Issues and Perspectives for Development (ACSPN Book Series 8, Pp. 32–45)*. Retrieved From [Http://www.Acspn.Com.Ng](http://www.acspn.com.ng)
- Nyitse, G. T., Inja, N., & Agbam, W. E. (2023) Public Relations Ethics and Professionalism in Nigeria. *Elizade University Journal of Innovative Communication and Media Studies* 2. 140-155.

- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372133927_PUBLIC_RELATIONS_ETHICS_AND_PROFESSIONALISM_IN_NIGERIA
- Olaoluwa, R (2021). Exploring The Factors Affecting the Ethical Values of Public Relations Practice in Lagos State, Nigeria *Covenant Journal of Communication*, 8(2),45-64.
- Olasoji, T. (2023). Not A Do-Or-Die Affair: Freelance Journalists in Nigeria and Ethical Dilemmas (Master's Thesis, West Virginia University), USA.
- Oparaugo, B. (2021). Role of Public Relations in Corporate Image Building and Sustenance. *International Journal of Applied Research in Business and Management*, 2(1), 26-37. <https://doi.org/10.51137/ijarbm.2021.2.1.3>
- Otubanjo, O., Amujo, O., & Melewar, T. C. (2013). 150 Years of Modern Public Relations Practices in Nigeria. *Global Media Journal: Pakistan Edition*, 6(1), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.2139/SSRN.1372704>
- Page, T. G., Capizzo, L. W., & Penning, T. (2024). A Case for the Plausibility of Public Relations Licensing: The Carrot of Privileged Communication. *Public Relations Review*, 50(1), 102408. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2023.102408>
- Penning, T. (2008). First impressions: US Media Portrayals of Public Relations in the 1920s. *Journal of Communication Management*, 12(4), 344-358. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13632540810919800>
- Pepple, I. I., Ijeoma, A., Reginal, K (2020). Influence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTS) On Modern Public Relations and Advertising Practice in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Communication*, 17(1),63-80. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355368890_Influence_of_information_and_communication_technologies ICTs_on_modern_public_relations_and_advertising_practice_in_Nigeria
- Pribadi, A., & Nasution, N. (2021). Digital Transformation to the Sustainability of Public Relations Profession in the Era of Disruption. *COMMICAST*, 2(1), 52. <https://doi.org/10.12928/commicast.v2i1.3149>
- Qausya, A. A., & Bernadette, S. (2023). Strategic Marketing Public Relations for Brand Elevation: A Case Study of the #JacquelleDisneyEdition Campaign. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 2(2), 80-102. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105002220245>
- Rabrenović, E. (2020). The Roles of Public Relations Practitioners in Organizations in Montenegro. *South Eastern European Journal of Communication*, 2(1), 91-103. <https://doi.org/10.47960/2712-0457.2020.1.2.91>
- Rodríguez-Salcedo, N., & Watson, T. (2021). 2 Public Relations Origins and Evolution: A Global Perspective. *Public Relations*, 23–44. Doi:10.1515/9783110554250-002
- Sampa, R. (2022) Public Relations Roles Carried out by Practitioners in Zambia. *Advances in Journalism and Communication*, 10, 425-440. doi: 10.4236/ajc.2022.104026.
- Servaes, J. (2016). Guanxi in intercultural communication and public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 42(3), 459-464. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.10.001>.

- Şeşen, E. (2015). Role Theory and Its Usefulness in Public Relations. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 136-143. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/295672194_Role_Theory_and_Its_Usefulness_in_Public_Relations
- Setoutah, S., Jeljeli, R., Farhi, F., Mallek, M., Hassan, D., & Selim, N. (2024). Role of Two-way Asymmetrical Communication in Sustaining Public Relations. *Emerging Science Journal*, 8(3), 1136-1152. <https://doi.org/10.28991/esj-2024-08-03-020>
- Sriramesh, K. (2007). The Relationship between Culture and Public Relations. *The Future of Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management: Challenges for the next generation*, 507-526.
- Sriramesh, K., & Takasaki, M. (1999). The Impact of Culture on Japanese Public Relations. *Journal of Communication Management*, 3(4), 337-352. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb023497>.
- Stojanović, E. T., Vlahović, M., Nikolić, M., Mitić, S., & Jovanović, Z. (2020). The Relationship between Organizational Culture and Public Relations in Business Organizations. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 21(6), 1628-1645. <https://doi.org/10.3846/jbem.2020.13377>.
- Sukhera, J. (2022). Narrative Reviews: Flexible, Rigorous, and Practical. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 14(4), 414-417. Doi:10.4300/Jgme-D-22-00480.1
- Sule, D. S., & Ridwanullah, A. O. (2023). The Evolution of Strategic Communication: Practices and Reflections in Nigeria. *Public Relations Review*, 49(2), 102323. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2023.102323>.
- Tripathi, A. (2023). The Impact of Paid News on Media Credibility in India. *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research*, 5(5). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2023.v05i05.7336>.
- Truong, B. (2024). "Everything is not What It Seems": Discovering Public Relations in Business Sectors in Vietnam [Master's thesis]. https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7065&context=gradschool_theses
- Ubwa, S. (2014). Professionalism of Public Relations in Nigeria. (Master's Thesis, University of Florida, USA. Retrieved From <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/Ufe0046859/00001>
- Udomah, J. P., Calixtus Akarika, D., & Udo Kierian, N. (2023). Digital Technology and Public Relations Practice in Nigeria: A Critical Discourse. *AKSU Journal of Administration and Corporate Governance*, 3(2), 154-164. <https://doi.org/10.61090/aksujacog.2023.013>.
- Udomisor, I. W., & Osademe, B. O. (2013). A critical Assessment of the Regulation of the Practice of Public Relations in Nigeria. *Journal of Mass Communication & Journalism*, 03(01). <https://doi.org/10.4172/2165-7912.1000144>
- Ukonu, M. O., Anyadike, D. O., & Okoro, N. M. (2018). Issues in the Evolution of Public Relations in Nigeria. *The Journal of International Communication*, 24(1), 37-54. DOI:10.1080/13216597.2017.1391108

- Verčič, D., Zerfass, A., & Wiesenberg, M. (2015). Global Public Relations and Communication Management: A European perspective. *Public Relations Review*, 41(5), 785-793. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2015.06.017>.
- Wöcke, A., Mthombeni, M. and Cuervo-Cazurro, A. (2020), "Reputations and Corruption: Bell Pottinger in South Africa", Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies, Vol. 10 No. 4. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EEMCS-04-2020-0109>
- Zimal, L. A., & Aysar A. A. (2021). Public Relations Strategy Analysis Crisis Communications. *Journal La Sociale*, 2(3),1-8. Doi:10.37899/Journal-La-Sociale.V2i3.388.
- Zoch, L. M., Supa, D. W., & VanTuyll, D. R. (2014). The Portrayal of Public Relations in the era of Ivy Lee through the Lens of the New York Times. *Public Relations Review*, 40(4), 723-732. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.02.002>.

Gender and Language: Analyzing Communication Styles in Argumentative Writing

Mario Nugroho Willyarto¹, Ignatius Gatot Suseno²

¹Faculty of Humanities, Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia

²Elementary Teacher in a Private School, Indonesia

Submitted: July 2024, **Revised:** November 2024, **Accepted:** December 2024

ABSTRACT

This study investigates gender-based differences in communication styles within argumentative writing, focusing on syntactic elements like pronouns and noun modifiers, as well as pragmatic aspects such as argumentation strategies. Using a mixed-method approach, data were collected from 30 students in the 2011 cohort of an English Department in Indonesia, evenly split between male and female participants. Quantitative analysis revealed that utilized personal pronouns more frequently, emphasizing individuality and logical reasoning, whereas women employed noun modifiers more often, showcasing precision and elaboration. Qualitative findings highlighted that men's arguments leaned towards directness and assertiveness, often grounded in bold claims, while women's arguments demonstrated greater coherence and emotional engagement, reflecting inclusivity and relational focus. These stylistic variations align with broader sociolinguistic patterns tied to gender. The study underscores the importance of understanding these differences to improve teaching methods and encourage the balanced development of argumentative writing skills across genders. The findings contribute to the growing body of research on gendered communication in second-language contexts, offering insights for educators and linguists aiming to address linguistic and cultural nuances in academic writing.

Keywords: *English, language, men and women, text communication, writing.*

INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, English is used as a common language of communication. In Indonesia's education sphere, English has become more popular and is being taught at some schools to prepare students to engage globally (Alrajafi, 2021). However, in Indonesia, English is communicated differently depending on gender.

The use of English in Indonesia covers almost all aspects: politics, economics, defenses, etc. Indonesia's education saw this phenomenon of globalization and immediately responded by developing a new educational system presented in English (Willyarto et al., 2017). When learning a second language (L2), the transfer relies on the first language (L1). In contrast, overgeneralization affects the L2 exclusively, and the mother tongue plays an essential role in the second language learning process (Sidupa

et al., 2019). Therefore, students learning English in this research were affected by their mother tongue, Indonesian. Notably, over seven hundred languages are spoken in Indonesia (Rahima, 2024).

In many fields of language research, attention to gender differences as a variable has increased in recent years (Kheder & Rouabhia, 2023). Researchers have been attracted to identifying and interpreting possible differences in linguistic styles between males and females for decades (Ali, 2021). Men and women employ different strategies in setting the information and encoding the relation between author and reader in texts (Argamon et al., 2003). They also discovered males' and females' differences in processing emotional material that may have been related to the use of language (Xu, et al., 2021).

Language and gender could be carried out in one of the studies as an interdisciplinary field of study and cover several aspects of - spoken and written -in English. Speaking skills, as one of the productive skills, are commonly used to measure language ability and are widely employed in investigating the differences between men's and women's speech. Learning about people's cultures has the potential to give a mirror image as the opportunity to challenge how to learn new ways to solve problems that we had previously given up on. Then, raising the local culture can improve social status by allowing them to be more creative and have their characteristics (Wahba & Chun, 2022).

Since childhood, Lessons are conducted by humans related to three conditions that support each other to produce a good performance in the form of skills. According to their mental development, students will learn well with enough prior knowledge and then continue to a higher level. Education/teaching provided excess rather than readiness regarding mental development, leading to an imbalance of mental development and cognition. Academic values will appear about the three factors mentioned above (Willyarto et al., 2015). The experience of learning of ones will affect one's ability to develop one's writing style.

This study explores gender-based differences in argumentative writing, focusing on syntactic and pragmatic aspects to reveal distinct communication styles. By analyzing the use of personal pronouns and noun modifiers, the research highlights how men and women construct arguments differently at the syntactic level. Additionally, examining pragmatic elements provides insight into how they convey stance and engage with their audience. While this study is limited in scope, it offers a critical foundation for understanding the intersection of gender and language in written discourse, contributing to broader discussions on communication, identity, and social dynamics in academic writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

a. Gender

Gender roles are the 'social definition' of women and men. They vary among different societies and cultures, classes, ages, and during different periods in history. Gender-

specific roles and tasks are often conditioned by household structure, access to resources, specific impacts of the global economy, and other locally relevant factors such as ecological conditions (Rannaweera, 2020). Gender relations are how a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities, and the identities of men and women about one another (Kiram, 2024).

b. Language

Gendered language manifests across phonological, pragmatic, and structural aspects, shaping communication styles in both spoken and written discourse (Ginarti et al., 2022). Everyday interactions reflect these patterns, as differences in speaking styles, body language, and linguistic preferences reinforce traditional gender roles, particularly in languages with grammatical gender like French and Spanish (Salsabila et al., 2024; Ashrafova, 2024). Such distinctions extend to argumentative writing, where male students favor action verbs to convey leadership and decisiveness, while female students more frequently use mental verbs to express introspection and emotional engagement (Ridha et al., 2024). Although these tendencies highlight linguistic differences, they risk perpetuating stereotypes that may limit expressive freedom in academic and professional settings, necessitating a critical examination of gendered language for more inclusive communication (Sylvia & Syarifudin, 2023).

c. Writing

Writing, as a structured mode of language production, extends spoken communication by relying on graphic symbols while retaining the cognitive processes and communicative intent of speech (Siburian, 2024; Syathroh et al., 2020). However, proficiency in speaking or reading does not necessarily equate to ease in writing, as written expression requires distinct skills and continuous practice. Much like mastering a physical skill, writing improves with persistent effort and engagement, reinforcing its role as a learned competence rather than an innate ability. This distinction is particularly crucial in argumentative writing, where clarity, coherence, and persuasive reasoning depend on both linguistic proficiency and critical thinking.

d. Argumentative Writing

Argumentative writing is a powerful tool for shaping perspectives, influencing opinions, and fostering critical reflection. Beyond mere text production, it serves as a means of engaging with the world and enhancing readers' awareness of their surroundings (Ferguson, 2021). By articulating viewpoints, defending reasoning, and addressing opposing perspectives, individuals contribute to intellectual discourse while also navigating the dynamics of social control, as writing plays a role in regulating societal structures and shaping collective thought (Ismail et al., 2022). A well-crafted argumentative text not only persuades through logical reasoning and evidence-based claims but also encourages dialogue and critical analysis, reinforcing its significance in both academic and public discourse.

e. Gender and Language

Gender differences in language use influence syntactic choices, cognitive processing, and argumentative strategies, shaping distinct communication styles. Men tend to favor noun modifiers for precision, while women more frequently use personal pronouns to foster shared understanding and contextual clarity (Argamon et al., 2003). These tendencies align with broader rhetorical patterns, as men often exhibit assertive argumentation through bold claims and direct engagement with evidence, whereas women, despite their structured reasoning, may display lower confidence in argumentation (Pilcher & Smith, 2024; Wong et al., 2020; Gotian, 2023). Furthermore, men's inclination toward originality sometimes comes at the expense of clarity, underscoring key differences in how gender shapes both the construction and presentation of arguments (Jannah et al., 2025).

METHODOLOGY

The data for this study were collected from 30 students from the 2011 cohort of the English Department at a School of Foreign Language. Using purposive sampling, a method that selects participants based on predefined criteria to meet specific research objectives, the study ensured that all subjects were proficient in English grammar and familiar with argumentative writing conventions. The participants, comprising 15 male and 15 female students, were enrolled in Composition 3 and had completed Composition 2 with a minimum grade of B. None of the students had lived in an English-speaking country, but all had been learning English since childhood, ensuring a relatively uniform linguistic background.

This study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative analyses to comprehensively examine the object of research (Nuzirwan & Sukandar, 2021; Yunus et al., 2023). The quantitative analysis focused on measuring the frequency of noun specifiers and personal pronouns in students' compositions to identify gender-based linguistic tendencies. Concurrently, qualitative analysis explored differences in argumentation style, revealing that male students tended to employ logical reasoning and assertive claims, whereas female students often incorporated personal experiences and relational discourse strategies. This dual approach provided a nuanced understanding of how gender influences linguistic choices and rhetorical structures in academic writing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. Men and Women in The Argumentative Writing

As highlighted in this study, men and women exhibit distinct stylistic tendencies in their argumentative writing. One key difference is using syntactic elements, such as noun modifiers and personal pronouns. Women, for instance, often employ more noun modifiers to create nuanced descriptions and emphasize specific details. On the other hand, men tend to use fewer modifiers, favoring more straightforward expressions. This

difference reflects broader linguistic patterns tied to gender, where women's language often leans toward precision and elaboration, while men's language exhibits a more direct and assertive tone.

These variations extend beyond mere stylistic preferences and may reveal deeper social and cultural influences on language use. The choice of personal pronouns, for example, could indicate differing levels of self-representation or interpersonal focus in argumentative contexts. Women might prioritize inclusivity and connection, frequently using pronouns like "we" or "our," whereas men might emphasize individuality with pronouns such as "I" or "my." By understanding these linguistic tendencies, educators and researchers can gain valuable insights into the interplay between gender and communication in academic and professional writing.

b. Women’s Argumentative Writing

After analyzing women’s writing, the author found that women tend to use noun modifiers more than personal pronouns. The figure below shows this.

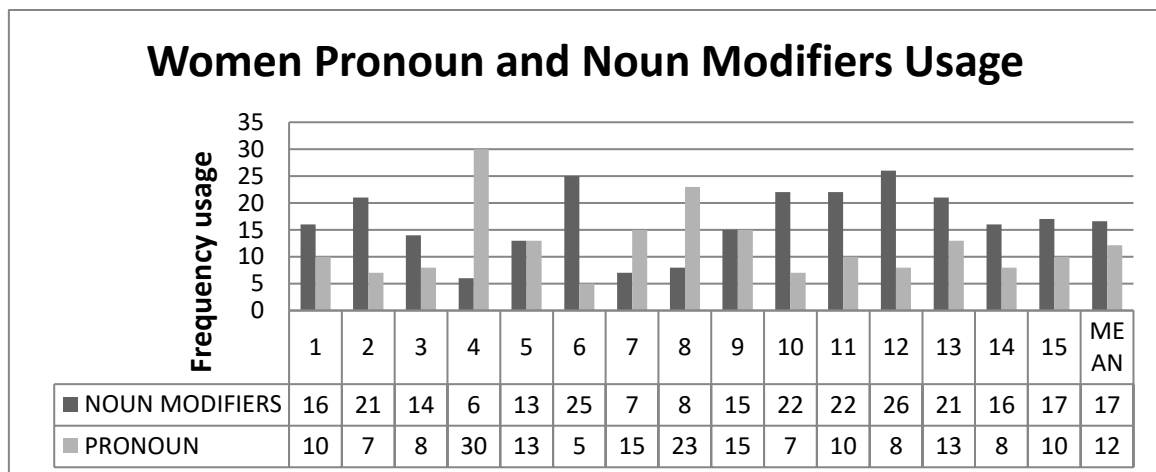


Figure 1. Women Pronoun and Noun Modifiers Use (Data Collected by Author, 2023)

An analysis of women’s argumentative writing reveals that they tend to employ noun modifiers more frequently than personal pronouns. As shown in Figure 1, women’s average use of noun modifiers was 17 occurrences per text, ranging from 6 to 26 instances. In comparison, their average use of pronouns was slightly lower at 12 occurrences, ranging from 5 to 30 instances. While the data indicates that noun modifiers are prominent in women’s writing, the narrow gap between the use of pronouns and noun modifiers suggests an almost balanced reliance on both syntactic features.

This finding supports earlier studies suggesting that women’s writing is characterized by elaboration and specificity, often conveyed through the use of noun modifiers. The tendency to use descriptive language might stem from women’s preference for providing clarity and emotional context in their arguments. On the other

hand, the use of pronouns, while slightly less frequent, reflects women’s ability to personalize their narratives and establish a connection with the reader.

The relatively close statistical mean between the use of noun modifiers and pronouns highlights an important nuance in women’s argumentative writing. While noun modifiers emphasize precision and detail, the use of pronouns suggests a parallel effort to maintain relatability and cohesion in their arguments. This balance indicates that women’s writing tends to integrate clarity and personal engagement, a combination that enhances the persuasive quality of their arguments.

Furthermore, the variability in the frequency of these linguistic elements—ranging from as low as 5 occurrences to as high as 30—demonstrates individual stylistic differences among women writers. This variability may reflect differences in topic familiarity, personal expression, or rhetorical strategies employed by individual authors

Table 1. The example of Noun modifiers and Pronoun Use

Noun modifiers	Pronoun
1. The students will study from ... The teacher needs to use ... although the lecture can do, the subject needs	1. They also use the ... We know that ... It will be useful to ...
2. The subject is difficult that ... The score can be given ... Their future not only depends on ...	2. He/she will face the ... It will be their obstacle I prefer to use ...
3. The materials can be studied The time can be use However, the fairness is questionable because...	3. They can use the internet ...
4. Their level is almost the Their Score is higher than ... The E-learning is a new	4. We are not ... It is very unreasonable ... They need to work.
5. Presents are the most thing... Critical Thinking is improving ... Fairness is the only one that ...	5. It will be better if ... We have some activity ...
6. The method is more boring... The guidance is unclear ... The module is useless ...	6. We are not... They asked us to ... It is funny when ...
7. ... Model that we need to ... Their absence is counted as ... Lecture absence is an unavoidable thing	7. We are not only ... It is very ... They see that they
8. The students can’t learn The lecture needs to be given... Materials need to be delivered and	8. They only see the positive... We need to see from ...
9. E-learning method something new ... The seminar method is very ... Students felt bored.	9. He/she cannot explain It is a technology that ... We , as a student, need...
10. E-mail is needed to send the assignment ... The handout can be sent ... The book can be downloaded ...	10. It (as an e-mail) is beneficial... It (as the Book) can be downloaded from ...

Noun modifiers	Pronoun
	<i>We, as a student, need the internet</i>
11. <i>Assignment</i> must be done in <i>The method</i> is not practiced at all. <i>The ways of thinking</i> do not have improvement ...	11. <i>They</i> only want to ... <i>We</i> still need to be ...
12. <i>Students</i> cannot underestimate ... <i>The lecture</i> needs to improve ... <i>The classroom</i> needs to be comfortable	12. <i>They</i> are some key ... <i>We</i> must find ...
13. <i>Chat room</i> is something useful ... <i>Technology</i> is something that people use ... <i>Internet</i> is the leading eye ...	13. <i>It</i> has been in every ... <i>We</i> cannot live ... <i>There</i> are some key factors ...
14. <i>The E-books</i> exist because ... <i>The classroom</i> is something ... <i>All universities</i> need to have ...	14. <i>It</i> is the key ... <i>They</i> can access the ...
15. <i>The lecture</i> can only give ... <i>The test</i> cannot be ... <i>Students</i> can be cheating in their ...	15. <i>We</i> felt that presents are... <i>They</i> can be a clue ...

Source: Data Collected by Author, 2023

In Table 1 above, we can see the use of pronouns and noun modifiers. On the other hand, we could see another result of pronoun use. Labov, in 1990, stated that language is also used for showing their social class. They use noun modifiers to make it more transparent. (Deuchar, 2020)The level could vary. Labov stated that it can be from their educational background or their position in the workplace. It also stated that men are generalized as the “leaders” in every section of their lives. On the other hand, if we see women's positions, they must be divided into some background. It could be their position or their education.

Another linguist, Robin Lakoff, argued that pronouns are used for some reason. One reason is to show any “neutral” or “unmarked” position. (Loureiro-Porto & Hiltunen, 2020)He stated that they are changing. He argued that when male authors use the pronoun, they mention a class thing specifically. On the other hand, when women used the pronoun, it meant connecting to a person or another subject to mention.

4.3 Men’s Argumentative Writing

We can see the difference between the men’s authors. They used the opposite of the women’s writing. The researcher also found the answers in men’s writing. Compared to the women’s writing, they used noun modifiers more often than pronouns. Men used pronouns more often than noun modifiers, especially when we wanted to compare the results to the women’s authors. In Figure 2, it is shown statistically that men were using the noun specifiers more often. The difference was almost fifty percent between the use of noun modifiers and pronouns. Table 2 states that men use 9.07 for the noun specifiers. They used 5 noun modifiers as the lowest frequency and 13 as the highest. On the other hand, men were statistically proof that they used more pronouns. They used about 18.6 pronouns in their writing. We could see that they are using 24 times as

the highest and 15 times as the lowest of the use of pronouns. So, it meant men use about 18,67 pronouns when they write in one passage.

It was different with the women. Men’s pronoun and noun specifiers have a massive gap between them, almost reaching 50 percent. A points difference is a big gap if we compare it with the women, who only have a points gap. We can see it in the table below to make it clear to preview.

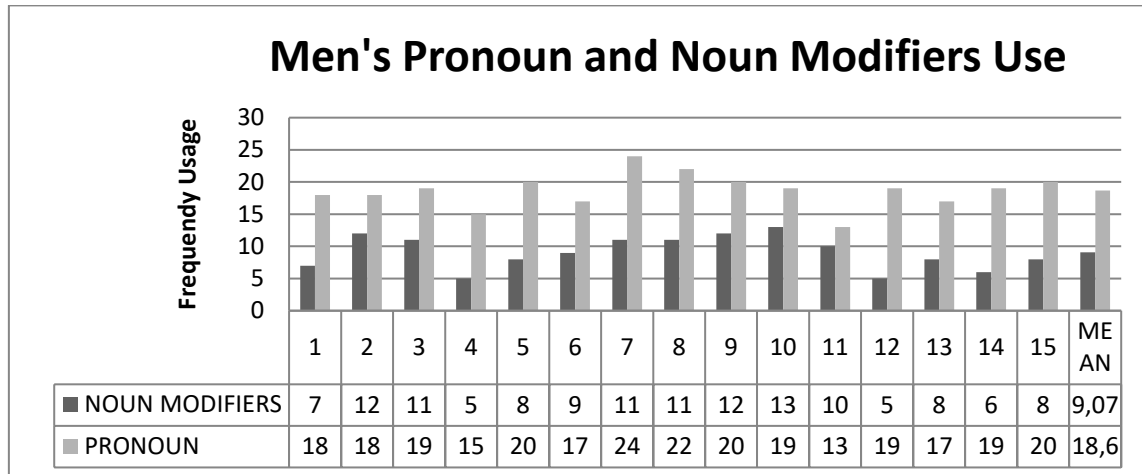


Figure 2. Men’s Pronoun and Noun Modifiers Use (Data Collected by Author, 2023)

It was different with the women. Men’s pronoun and noun specifiers have a massive gap between them, almost reaching 50 percent. A points difference is a big gap if we compare it with the women, who only have a points gap. We can see it in the table below to make it clear to preview.

Table 2. The Example of Noun Specifiers and Pronoun Use in Men

Noun Specifiers	Pronoun
1. The lecture needs to send Student, however, needs ... Material is not as easy	1. We as a student do not have ... They cannot be learned by
2. Subject can be learnt ... Students can use the ... Lectures do not need to ...	2. It is a technology ... He/She cannot always ... They can send the materials ...
3. Material can be found in the ... E-book is a useful ... The Internet needs to be explored ...	3. They can be the instruments ... we have to be active ...
4. Subject is difficult if ... Students need to ... The thesis is not something ...	4. We need the lecture to ... It will be difficult ... They need to make sure that ...
5. Subject can be learnt ... Student needs to see and ... The lecture must take the ...	5. It is impossible to ... We have to count ... I never agree ...

Noun Specifiers	Pronoun
6. The Internet is something that ... Presence is not a must in ... Students can learn in their ...	6. We do not need to spend ... They can be used to ... It is a digital era that ...
7. Material is not as difficult as ... Students can learn by ... Lectures do not need ...	7. They need to ... We are busy.
8. Thesis cannot do by ... Speaking needs to take ... Writing need to write ...	8. They are not reasonable ... It is not dependent on ... I suggest ...
9. The Internet is something to ... E-learning is a new method ... Students are very ...	9. It is possible to not ... We can use the technology ...
10. Students need to see the ... Lectures have some rights to ... Subjects cannot be scored if ...	10. I still want to ... They still need guidance ... We are still learning ...
11. Lecture is not a God ... Students still have some rights to have ...	11. They sometimes take ... We cannot get good judgment ... I want to make my career also ...
12. Materials can be taken in ... Lecture also can use ... Technology is beneficial if ...	12. It is weird ... They need to use the technology ...
13. IT is something ... Technology is everywhere ... The computer is not a thing ...	13. It needs our consideration ... They have to learn
14. Subjects , for several, cannot ... Writing needs a text that ... Reading , on the other hand, ...	14. They are some skills ... I also agree that ...
15. Subjects is difficult ... Lectures have the guidance to the ... Students need the guidance ...	15. They are still learning ... We can be arrogant ... I still need the ...

Source: Data Collected by Author, 2023

Table 2 above shows us that there are some indicators for using the pronoun. (Argamon et al., 2003) They were also developing a system for indicating the use of noun modifiers or pronouns. The system is divided into three categories: first-person, second-person, and third-person. They stated that when noun modifiers are used, it means the author wants to clarify the “things” that they discussed.

4. 4 The Differences Between Men and Women in The Argumentative Writing

After doing the research, the author found some differences between men and women authors. The first is in the syntactical aspect. In this aspect, the author finds that men authors more often use personal pronouns than women. We can see this thoroughly in Figure 3 below.

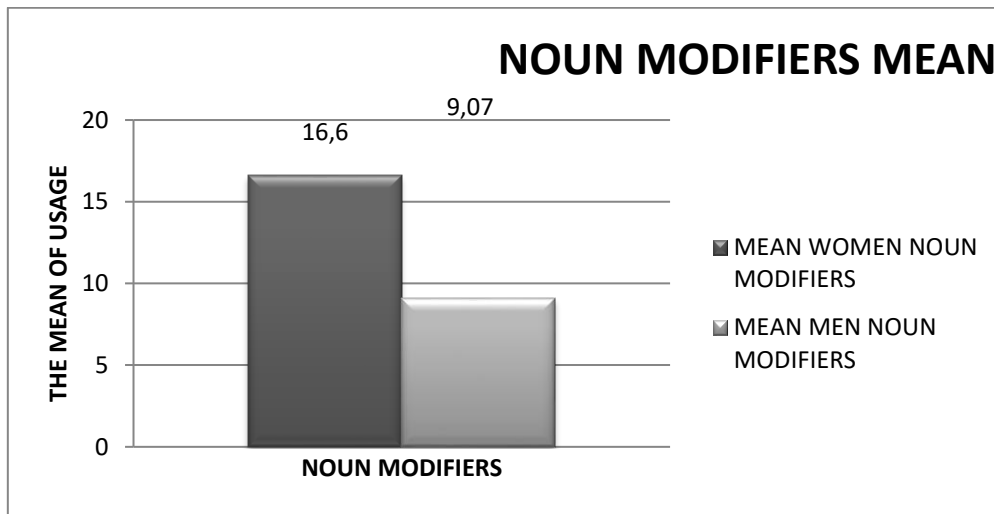


Figure 3. The Mean of Noun Modifiers (Data Collected by Author, 2023)

When noun modifiers are used, the mean of differences between men and women is almost half. This could have happened because the backgrounds of the samples were in different areas.

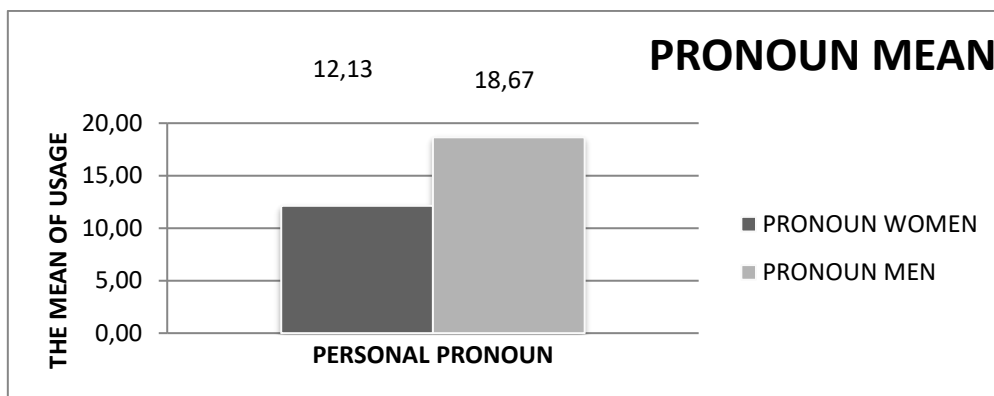


Figure 4. The Mean of Pronoun (Data Collected by Author, 2023)

Figure 4 above shows that the result did not differ from the noun specifiers graphic. The result was also different from the result from the previous study. In contrast, in women's writing, pronouns connect to a person or another subject mentioned. Meanwhile, when men used noun specifiers, they wanted to clarify something they wrote. On the other hand, when a woman uses the noun specifiers, she is in a higher position or more professional than the reader.

4.5 Men's and Women's Argumentative Writing

Another theory says that men and women differ in how they present their writing, not only to show their arguments but also to show how confident they are with their arguments. On the other hand, women authors often used their personal response to

give the solution or to solve the problem. There were many indicators of the strength of the arguments. We can see the difference in the table below.

The author only discussed the use of the facts, and I am sure the arguments or the facts follow that. The author chose it because of the facts, which I am sure could show how confident they are with their arguments. It was possible if one text used more than one of those phrases. It was because they needed more than one argument when they needed to show their arguments in the argumentative writings.

It is assumed that male authors more often use strong indicators to express their arguments. On the other hand, we could not argue that men were not using weak arguments. It was because the author only sees their argumentative writing, not interviews or observes them.

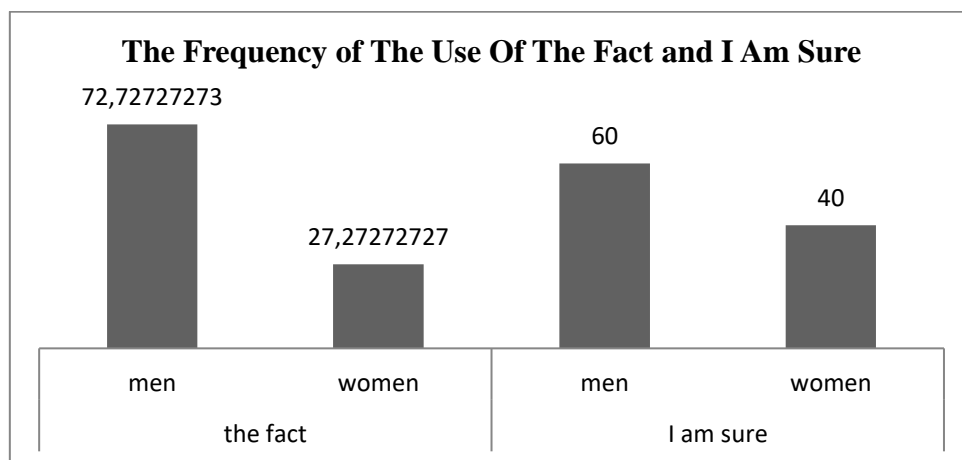


Figure 5. The frequency of the use of the fact and, I am sure (Data Collected by Author, 2023).

As we can see from the table, men use the fact more often, I am sure with 60%. On the other hand, women use it more often, I am sure with 40%. The same situation happened in fact. Men use the fact more often, 72%, while women use it for 28%. We can see the use of the fact in Table 3 below.

Table 3. I am sure of the use of fact in men’s writing.

Men indicator
<p>1 the fact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Even though presence is important, it will not be seen as a requirement to get a job.</i> • <i>The fact is that presence is one of the factors in the lecture that gives the score.</i> • <i>In fact, some universities have long-distance studies that use the Internet to give students a different way to study.</i> • <i>In fact, we need to fulfill the presence percentage to do the final test.</i> • <i>Students do not only study; they also need to do their job, which is to spend their time.</i> • <i>Presence is one important criterion for fulfilling the final test requirement. Some students can pass the subject with an A score even though they are often absent from the classroom.</i> • <i>It is important that the company just sees the GPA, not the percentage of presence.</i> • <i>They can use the internet, but they do not have the chance to ask the lecturer directly.</i>
<p>2 I am sure</p>

Men indicator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I am sure that students who are often absent have lower scores than others.</i> • <i>I am sure the company sees the score, not the presence.</i> • <i>I am sure that 75% of students here are working.</i> • <i>If they do not attend the class, they will struggle to take the test.</i> • <i>I am sure because, in my company, they only see the GPA, not the presence.</i>

The researcher could only assume that men were using more logical thinking and women were using their feelings. This was because the researcher was only analyzing their writing, not interviewing or observing them.

Table 4. I am sure of the use of Facts in women's writing.

Women indicator
<p>1 in fact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because the students do not have to be in class and attend the lecture, they can find a stepping stone in their career world. • Because Indonesia has a vast area nationwide, students may come from outside Jakarta or the country. • If a student is absent for more than 40%, then the student is not allowed to take the final test. Moreover, if the student is not having the final test, it is possible for that student to not pass the subject. <p>I am sure</p> <p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you know your exact capability, I am sure you will speak English out loud with confidence. • I am sure with the presence because the lecture has said that we must be active students in the class because he will know who is serious with my subject

In Table 4 above, we can observe the significant variations in how they are presented. In contrast, some women used logical thinking. They showed their arguments, but not as strong as men. In the men, we could see the use of the fact and, I am sure. In contrast, the use of the evidence in women was less than in men. Men use 13 times to show and clarify their arguments about their writing. On the other hand, women only used 5 times to clarify their arguments. Women authors usually lacked confidence, but men authors lacked clarity. However, if we look at the result, men use bold arguments and give clarity from their arguments more often than women.

The clarity here meant that men tended to use their arguments. They only saw what had happened. Men also saw that they often obtained the evidence for their arguments from what they felt and saw. They argued from their experience. Men used more powerful assumptions than used arguments. Typically, men who were to the point of the problem made them, sometimes forgot to add some evidence to make their arguments strong enough. Not only did they forget some "good" evidence, but they also usually jumped from one argument to another. Meanwhile, women wrote differently from men. It seemed they did not have a strong argument, but they had facts that could be used. Women tend to make an orderly composition, composing their text carefully. They did not jump from one argument to another but made a "flow" in their

composition. This is what the linguist said about the lack of consistency itself. It was about the arguments and how to communicate their argument in a strong composition.

CONCLUSION

The authors discovered syntactic disparities between men and women when using pronouns and noun modifiers. Firstly, the author found the differences between men and women in using pronoun and noun modifiers. Some linguists said that the use of pronouns and noun modifiers in men and women differed. Women use the pronoun to connect from one subject to another. On the other hand, men used a pronoun to mention a specific subject. Secondly, the author found that men and women presented their arguments differently. Men seemed more confident than women. They used the indicators more often than women. Their arguments were more substantial than those of women. They lacked substantial in showing their arguments. They tended to use their arguments and assumptions to make their composition.

On the other hand, women use a more passive voice than men when they present their arguments. However, they are more clear in their arguments. They have “flow” in their compositions, which makes their compositions stronger.

BIODATA

Mario Nugroho Willyarto S.Kom, M.Pd, has been active in education since 2001, teaching at various levels, including higher education. He is a Binus University lecturer specializing in Indonesian Language, Business Process, Leadership, and Cross-Cultural Management. His research focuses on education, social education, and communication. Currently, he is studying social education and communication strategies for managing stray cat populations through Trap-Neuter-Return programs in areas like Bekasi, Bogor, Malang, Pati, and Depok, utilizing technology and information systems to support these initiatives.

Ignatius Gatot Suseno has been working in education since 2011. He is now a vice principal at St. John Gading Serpong. His passion for education brought him to the awareness of teaching in elementary school. He is now focusing on education at a younger age.

REFERENCES

- Alrajafi, G. (2021). The Use of English in Indonesia: Status and Influence. *Sigeh*, 1 (1). <https://journal.uml.ac.id/ELt/issue/view/54>
- Argamon, S., Koppel, M., Fine, J., & Shimoni, A. R. (2003). Gender, Genre, and Writing Style in Formal Written Texts. *Text*, 23(3). <https://doi.org/10.1515/text.2003.014>
- Ashrafova, I. (2024). *Language and Gender: Exploring Structures and Bias in Linguistic Norms*. <https://doi.org/10.69760/aghel.024048>
- Deuchar, M. (2020). Code-switching in Linguistics: A Position Paper. *Languages*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages5020022>
- Ferguson, B. (2021). Frederick Law Olmsted: A Pragmatic Exception to Transcendental Writing. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645145.2020.1902097>, 24(3), 283–297. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645145.2020.1902097>
- Ginarti, D., Nurhapitudin, I., Ruminda, R., & Iksan, H. H. (2022). Study of Language Features Used by Male and Female in #SaveJohnnyDepp on Instagram and Twitter. *Az-Zahra: Journal of Gender and Family Studies*, 2(2), 127-142. <https://doi.org/10.15575/azzahra.v2i2.14388>
- Gotian, R. (2023, February 19). *Why Are We Still Telling Women They Lack Self-Confidence?* Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ruthgotian/2023/02/19/why-are-we-still-telling-women-they-lack-self-confidence/>
- Ismail, I., Ali, H., & Anwar Us, K. (2022). Factors Affecting Critical and Holistic Thinking in Islamic Education in Indonesia: Self-Concept, System, Tradition, Culture. (Literature Review of Islamic Education Management). *Dinasti International Journal of Management Science*, 3(3). <https://doi.org/10.31933/dijms.v3i3.1088>
- Jannah, T. H., Hemasti, R. A., & Minarsih, Y. (2025). Gender-based Differences in Self-confidence: Implications for Career Counseling among Male and Female University Students. *Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling Terapan*, 9(1), 36-46. <https://doi.org/10.30598/bkt.v9i1.17108>
- Kheder, K., & Rouabhia, R. (2023). Gender Differences in Learning Languages. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics Studies*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejals.v6i2.456>
- Kiram, M. Z. (2024). Interrogating Masculinity, Gender Performance, and Power Dynamics in Indonesian Society through Taylor Swift's 'The Man'. *Gender Equality: International Journal of Child and Gender Studies*, 10(2), 209. <https://doi.org/10.22373/equality.v10i2.25877>
- Loureiro-Porto, L., & Hiltunen, T. (2020). Democratization and Gender-neutrality in English(es). *Journal of English Linguistics*, 48(3), 0075424220935967. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0075424220935967>
- Nuzirwan, I., & Sukandar, R. (2021). The Impact of Hoaxes to the Business of Information Technology Companies in Indonesia. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 1(1), 41. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105001120215>

- Pilcher, J. J., & Smith, P. D. (2024). Social Context during Moral Decision-making Impacts Males More than Females. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1397069>
- Rahima, A. (2024). Language Documentation as A Revitalization Effort Regional Languages are Starting to Extinct. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Sciences and Arts*, 3(3), 72-76. <https://doi.org/10.47709/ijmdsa.v3i3.4123>
- Rannaweera, K. G. N. U. (2020). The Hidden Factor of Female Offending-Gender: A Criminological Analysis on Burglary Related Environmental Factors in Sri Lanka View project. *Article in International Journal of Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.30954/2249-6637.03.2020.1>
- Ridha, M., Sinar, T. S., & Zein, T. T. (2024). *Gender-Based Differences in EFL Writing: Linguistic Features in Indonesian High School Students' Narratives*. <https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v6i3.22528>
- Salsabila, I. N., Umam, A. F., Nurjanah, A., Wahyuningsih, O., & Lestari, A. (2024). The Role of Gender in Language and Communication: A Linguistic Perspective. *Eduvest - Journal of Universal Studies*, 4(1), 260-269. <https://doi.org/10.59188/eduvest.v4i1.1061>
- Siburian, W. A. (2024). *The Effect of Using Genre-Based Learning Method on Students' Writing Descriptive Text a SMP 1 Paranginan* [Master's thesis]. <https://repository.uhn.ac.id/bitstream/handle/123456789/11413/WIDY%A%20A.%20SIBURIAN.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Sidupa, C., Ningsih, R. Y., & Werhoru, D. (2019). The Grammar of Indonesian Language: A Case Study of RBS Students. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*. <https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1175/1/012242>
- Syathroh, I. L., Musthafa, B., & Purnawarman, P. (2020). Providing Teaching Resources for Young Learner Classes: Best Practices in EFL Context. *ELT in Focus*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.35706/eltinf.v2i2.3054>
- Sylvia, S., & Syarifudin, A. S. (2023). Gender And Language Use in Academic Discourse: Empowering Women's Voices. *Transformational Language Literature and Technology Overview in Learning (Transtool)*, 2(3), 19-23. <https://doi.org/10.55047/transtool.v2i3.1377>
- Wahba, S., & Chun, Y. (2022). Orange is the New Colour of City Competitiveness: The Role of Local Governments in Promoting Cultural and Creative Industries. *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal*, 15(2), 136. <https://doi.org/10.69554/ylyw9891>
- Willyarto, M. N., Pane, M., & Chairiyani, R. (2015). Mathematics Learning Method of Bar Modeling for Elementary School Students. *Advanced Science Letters*, 21(7), 2328-2331. <https://doi.org/10.1166/asl.2015.6266>
- Willyarto, M. N., Werhoru, D., & Gea, A. A. (2017). The use of English in Learning Mathematics for Grade 7 Junior High School. *Proceedings - 2017 International Symposium on Educational Technology, ISET 2017*, 177-179. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ISET.2017.48>

- Wong, B., Yuan-Li, &, & Chiu, T. (2020). University Lecturers' Construction of the "Ideal" Undergraduate Student. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 44(1), 54–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2018.1504010>
- Xu, J., Lin, F., Liu, S., Peng, X., & Wei, Z. (2021). Gender Differences among Children in Language Expression of Emotional and Motion Related Words. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.211220.194>
- Yunus, U. (2023). *The 4th International Conference of Biospheric Harmony Advanced Research (ICOBAR 2022)*. E3S Web of Conf. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202338803025>

Shifting Communication through Virtual Influencers Driven Metaverse Revolution

Saman Ange-Michel Gougou

Université Alassane Ouattara, Bouaké (Cote d'Ivoire)

Submitted: September 2024, **Revised:** November 2024, **Accepted:** December 2024

ABSTRACT

The metaverse revolution and the shifting to artificial intelligence (AI) are transforming human daily activities with the growth of chatbots and virtual agents changing communication and public relations strategies. Therefore, this paper aims to explore and question virtual influencers in Africa regarding communication strategies in organizations and human daily activities according to the metaverse revolution. This explorative qualitative descriptive research adopted a synthesis review of scientific publications and online investigation on two virtual influencers pages on Instagram in Africa to collect the data according to the influencers marketing paradigm on social media. First, the findings underlined the social presence, parasocial connectedness and perceived credibility of these virtual AI influencers in the innovative usages to support marketing and communication. Then, the results underlined the prospective application of AI virtual influencers and ethical issues in communication and public relations strategies. As a recommendation, the integration of AI Virtual influencers and AI agents in human activities requires to update the skills of managers and users by considering a human-centered approach according to the industry 5.0 paradigm.

Keywords: *virtual influencer, digital communication, public relations, metaverse revolution, social media.*

INTRODUCTION

In the world, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in human activities transform organizations and social representation of life (attitudes, behaviors, stereotypes) from traditional communication based on human digital practices to virtual personas influencing daily perceptions (Koles et al, 2024; Bjola, 2022). In fact, the presence of Virtual personas as digital innovation characters creates the growth of metaverse as a hybrid world connecting different social media and humans in an augmented reality supported by the platformization (Qadir & Fatah, 2023; Bibri & Allam 2022). It is the convergence of physical and virtual spaces accessed through computers and enabled by immersive technologies supporting users socialization in the virtual world through personas represented by avatars interacting on social media and more.

This revolution offers new perspectives of conversation between humans and virtual characters in a dynamic communication process. Thus, the metaverse revolution and the shift to artificial intelligence (AI) influence human activities every day with the growth of these bots and virtual agents changing communication and public relations strategies (Böhndel et al, 2023; Koles et al, 2024). Luo & Kim (2024) have emphasized that these new AI-driven influencers are created by high-tech companies and marketing experts. These people are fictional characters who do not have a physical form, but look like real people in terms of physical appearance, behavior, and emotional expression.

Due to this context, all current and future trends in the field of communication are disrupted by this transformation related to the metaverse revolution. For example, IoT (Internet of Things), big data, machine learning, and intelligence marketing approaches establish a high increase of integration of connected technologies in all human activities from a traditional model to a smart approach. Thus, in the field of communication and Public Relations, this revolution of human practices through the presence of digital AI driven agents in marketing and communication practices modifies human behaviors through a high engagement in the metaverse, presenting both benefits and issues related to the mastery and impacts of these virtual AI personas influencing on human employment, management and well-being (Hassan, 2023; Chamblee, 2022; Böhndel et al,2023; Koles et al, 2024; Mo & Zhou, 2024).

In addition, in the same context, the need for visibility and social capital development requires community managers to use influencers to promote the brands offers and interact with visitors depending on their requests. In particular, advancements in artificial intelligence, the emergence of social media platformization, and fantasies of the metaverse (where the real and virtual worlds merge into a vast, immersive digital experience) are fueling the expansion of influencer marketing online.

As a result, more and more companies and organizations are using influencers to promote their products and services on virtual platforms like social media (Cabeza-Ramírez et al., 2022; Allal-Chérif et al. 2024 ; Allam et al., 2024; Bibri, 2022). It means that the metaverse revolution and the virtual world era generate new practices (virtual personas, identity, cities, and similar things) and challenges (sociability, trustworthiness, digital literacy, and similar things) for communication managers (Wibawa et al., 2022; Gougou & Paschal, 2024) .

Therefore, in all areas of activity, the shift to AI and its innumerable possibilities are changing human habits and creating new perspectives of life in communities according to the interrelationships with IoT. This disruption produces new strategies and orientations in sort that it is often difficult to effectively manage messages and online requests by human workforce, calling to adopt virtual AI agents (Saman, 2023). Especially in communication marketing, the increase of AI integration in strategies appears with the integration of intelligent agents such as chatbot, virtual influencers and other machine learning applications to support the communication process online and in person.

In this situation, human influencers are increasingly supported by intelligent agents (virtual influencers, chatbot, etc.) in their communication activities. Even if it seems to be a recent phenomenon, this transformation of digital communication approaches requires special attention in the academic field to explain the new communication practices through usages of virtual influencers (VIs) in the metaverse (Kamal & Himel, 2023; Gorichanaz, 2023). For example, the utilization of chat GPT generations in education and all creative activities showed new trends in human integration of machine and digital agents to support education, communication, knowledge sharing and help in sharpening the process of economy, environment on society well-being. So, from a communication perspective, these personas are mainly created and used for social media marketing, including selling a particular message or endorsement of a particular brand. As a result, for Lou et al. (2022) virtual influencers have millions of followers on social media and influence digital natives' engagement and decision making in remarkable ways.

Moreover, the rise of virtual influencers is new, and many people in the world are unfamiliar with these new personas, even if they interact with them. They may not recognise if they are interacting with a real person (Human Influencer) or not (Virtual Influencer / VI). The differences in the use of AI in the organizations and human practices, the metaverse modifies human interactions, business activities and prospects satisfaction in an interconnected world supported by technology (Hassan, 2023; Kamal & Himel, 2023; Khuat, 2023). Specifically, for Azaroual (2024), the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in Africa presents promising prospects and significant challenges.

For this scholar, while some countries on the African continent stand out for their commitment and progress in preparing for AI adoption, others face significant obstacles such as structural inequalities and digital divides. The author emphasized that this disparity highlights the need for an inclusive and holistic approach to ensure that all African countries can benefit from AI, while closing the gap with other regions of the world. Yet, according to Ju et al. (2024) and Conti et al. (2022), VIs are an intriguing option with the potential to harness the positive aspects of human influencers with additional control over content and expression.

AI-powered digital avatars called "virtual influencers" are growing as marketing influence partners with the biggest brands. Iffah et al. (2024) underlined the importance of questioning how the virtual characters of Indonesian female influencers @arbie_seo, @lav_caca, @hai.veronika, and @lentaripagi are portrayed and how these characteristics are integrated into social media marketing strategies through storytelling-based narratives. These virtual personas are famous virtual influencers followed by millions of people on social media (Choudhry et al., 2022). For example, famous VIs in 2024 were Lil Miquela (the trailblazer), Shudu (the world's first digital supermodel), Noonouri (the fashion icon), Lu do Magalu (Brazil's sweetheart), Imma (Japan's virtual it-girl), Aitana Lopez (the Spanish girl with a human touch), GEICO Gecko (green influencer), Luks (metaverse boy).

The use of AI personas is not just for one-way communication it is a process of interactivity, the AI personas create a new support for conversation like chatbots and virtual influencers. If the chatbots are a technology adopted in the organization to support conversation online and to assist managers in communicating with the customers and visitors, the growth of virtual influencers on social media generates another revolution in strategies of influence and branding through AI adoption activities. Faced with the impact of AI communication tools, the question of marketing management activities supported by AI became a crucial concern regarding the possible applications of virtual influencers and the issues related to AI integration in human life (Chamblee, 2022; Conti et al, 2022; Bjola, 2022).

Lee et al. (2024) state that there is also a lack of research that examines why and how virtual influencers might be better than human influencers in influencing consumer purchase decisions. AI has resulted in a digital revolution in communication and social transformation. In our research, we investigate how virtual influencers integration in human life offers news possibilities in communication and public relations strategies according to the metaverse revolution.

This paper aims to explore and question virtual influencers shifting in terms of communication strategies in human daily activities. Indeed, digital management through AI and technology is a reality changing strategies of development. It calls for analyzing the usages of AI personas in communication perspectives to promote the growth of organization and the well-being of individuals.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

a. Influencer marketing paradigm

The rise of AI in communication and human life is creating a significant impact in society. There is a crucial change in all human activities and this is affecting the global south as well as western countries. Although virtual influencers are most prevalent in Asia and North America, Africa has also embraced this trend with savvy marketers finding new ways of influence based on hybrid influencer marketing solutions for brands .

Thinking about VIs from the research perspective takes into account Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0 paradigms according to a technology-centered approach and human-centered reflection on the integration of digital tools to support communities and organizations in their daily activities (Gougou et al., 2023; Melo et al. , 2023). This calls to question the outcomes of AI-driven VIs in terms of tools to sustain human activities and business or not. In recent studies, the shifting innovative evolution of the digital revolution calls to use the source credibility theory through the TAES model factors such as *Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, Expertise, and Similarity* enhancing the influence of VIs (Böhndel et al., 2023; Koles et al., 2024).

In this dynamic, Jhawar et al. (2023) stated that this metaverse revolution calls to question the emergence of virtual influencers through a shift in the influencer marketing paradigm. According to these authors, this revolution increases brand awareness and attracts many social media users (SMUs; especially Gen Y and Gen Z

millennials) to brands through the influencer marketing approach. It is a powerful branding and marketing tool to persuade people.

Similarly, in this study, avatars and artificially created characters known as virtual influencers have millions of followers on social media and influence digital natives' engagement and decision making in remarkable ways (Pushparaj & Kushwaha, 2023; Choudhry et al., 2022; Lou et al., 2022). Therefore in a study focused on communication and brand marketing, many theories could be mentioned without limit (Kim et al., 2023; Rossi & Rivetti, 2023). But the dimension of credibility is very important as mentioned by Jhavar et al. (2023) in the influencer marketing paradigm.

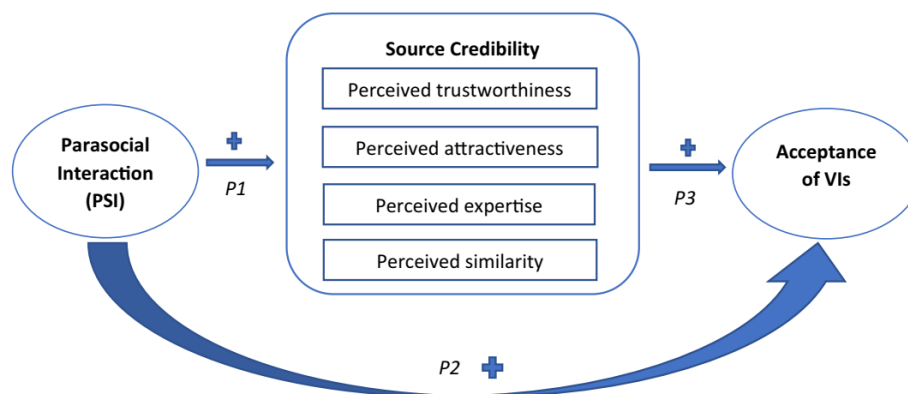


Figure 1: Influencer Marketing Paradigm (Jhavar et al., 2023)

Prior research states that individuals (PSI) develop a sense of friendship and intimacy toward the influencers they like and follow based on the PSI on the media platform, and recent literature on influencer marketing recognizes the role of audience comments and a two-way interaction between influencers and followers. Due to our research field, finally, this current study on shifting communication through virtual influencers driven metaverse revolution applied the relevant aspects of influencer marketing according to Jhavar et al. (2023).

The authors consider the relationship model between SMUs and VIs based on their 3 variables: *social presence*, *parasocial connectedness*, and *perceived credibility*. It offered insights into improving Public Relations and communication practices in the metaverse for the effectiveness of computer-generated imagery (CGI).

b. Virtual Influencers Phenomenon

In this research on virtual influencers, we take into consideration Driven Marketing uncountable innovation through the metaverse revolution ecosystem background changing communication and Public Relations trends.

Conti et al. (2022) paper focused on the phenomenon of virtual influencers as Computer Generated Imagery (CGI) characters who act and resemble humans even though they do not physically exist in the real world. The authors questioned their

evolution, opinions, ethics, purpose in marketing, and future perspective according to social trends and activities. According to mixed research design extensive study, data collection used the literature, press articles, social platforms data, blogs and interviews to provide a comprehensive reflection on virtual influencers.

Starting from their development opportunities and threats, the results showed that if virtual influencers are useful, there are controversial opinions related to their use in communication and human activities. In particular, this fact concerns the Communication and Public Relations field, knowing that the Virtual Influencers activities on social media affect social capital and brand visibility according to prospects or public experience. According to the participants, currently, the majority of virtual influencers are CGI-made, limiting the audience interaction to static social media posts or videos. Thus, the ethical issue of integrating virtual influencers into marketing and human activities remains a big question face to the advances in AI communication feathers and virtual reality innovations.

Moreover, whether their behavior will change on different communication platforms, or whether companies will develop new systems to increase their functionalities", AI-driven virtual influencers will raise ethical concerns worthy of discussion in the future (Conti et al., 2022). These ethical concerns could be related to virtual "fake" identities, management and communication transparency, deepfake, manipulation, VIs control, and social responsibility, and so on (De Brito Silva et al. 2024; Lee et al., 2022; Shin & Lee, 2023; Kalla, 2022; Conti et al., 2022). In continuation of this study, this paper focuses on a descriptive approach of VIs perception after a literature review and investigation of their practice on social media in Africa.

Hofeditz et al. (2023) investigate the scope of influencers' trustworthiness on social media and the impact on the brand to promote its product. Through quantitative empirical research on Instagram, Hofeditz et al analyze the difference in trustiness of social virtual influencers compared to human influencers in the pursuit of the success factor of online marketing. Findings revealed that although participants were often unsure whether the presented influencer was human or computer-generated, perceived trust, social presence, and humanity were consistently rated higher for human influencers, according to the authors. This fact has important implications for communication and Public Relations strategies, as it underscores the power of influencers to influence user perceptions of trustworthiness.

The presentation of the content of human and VIs, published on Instagram, showed that they were not able to identify the different sources. This means that the integration of virtual influencers in communication marketing offers new perspectives of influence on the market, in terms of user behavior and acceptance of reality. In conclusion, these authors underlined that to gain deeper insights into potential, unconscious decision conflicts in a discussion to determine trust evaluations of the influencer on social media for brand marketing. It is an interesting paper on the integration of AI in communication and Public Relations. However, this paper doesn't

take into consideration the human-centered perspective in a low-income context such as that of the Global South countries.

In their study, Lee et al. (2024) focused in the context of influencers through a comparison between virtual and human influencers marketing regarding the moderating role of machine heuristics on perceived authenticity of influencers. The scope of this paper examines how virtual influencers could be more effective than human influencers in influencing consumer purchase decisions. Indeed, in the world, the AI-driven virtual influencer is capturing people's attention as new artifacts of communication that influence a variety of people online. The digital natives and Gen Z are also under the engaging with these new personas in the creation and utilising their advanced communication experience on social media.

This study investigates the effects of virtual influencers (AI persona) vs. human influencers on the perceived authenticity of consumers according to the concept of perceived authenticity of influencers and machine heuristics through an online analysis between-subjects design experiment. The results highlighted that virtual influencers were unexpectedly perceived as more authentic than human influencers and provided valuable insights into the use of virtual influencers for marketing purposes. So, this paper scope helped to sharpen the background of our current research, which takes place in the African context as a contribution to this issue related to the disruption of virtual influencers in communication and Public Relations implications.

All these studies show the importance to investigate o the AI transformation in daily communication strategies and specifically on how virtual influencers change organization and communication activities. In particular, this current study in the African context tries to contribute to the debate and provide some explorative views on the current and future perspective of these tools in society, organization and human well-being in the digital era.

METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to explore and question virtual influencers in terms of communication strategies in human daily activities. Indeed, in organizations, digital management, AI, and technology are realities changing development strategies.

Therefore, a qualitative descriptive research design was adopted to support the research validity through inclusion and exclusion criteria. First, researchers use online scientific papers on virtual influencers and AI-driven influencers to explore the development of virtual agents, including lenses in communication strategies.

As a recent phenomenon, the literature review on this issue was crucial to increase the research viability and avoid biases related to self-judgment. For the publications on the topic scope, researchers required to find research papers online through the keywords: Virtual influencer, chatbot, intelligent marketing tool, AI in communication strategies (Jhawar et al., 2023). So, as the phenomenon is very recent, we used both empirical and theoretical studies on this question from recent publications in the last 3 years .

Then, a virtual ethnography approach by observing activities on selected VIs based in Africa, allowed to enrich the past publications with recent data in a different context. Even if the selected VIs avatars don't have millions of followers, they represent a good example of technology integration in the metaverse to support communication and Public Relations. In addition, the choice of a descriptive research is appropriate because of its ability to accurately describe a phenomenon. In this type of descriptive research, the researchers must collect the available data using research tools such as observation and analysis.

In summation, a descriptive qualitative research design supported by a case study allowed to conduct this research according to validity and reliability inclusion/exclusion criteria: 1. Africa metaverse context, 2. AI driven marketing publications, 3. VIs ethical questions. Thus, the researchers could be easily connected to the question and provide clear ideas from the available selected papers. Then, the selection of 2 AI-driven virtual influencers in Africa allowed to enrich the findings with primary data from real investigations.

In this study, researchers used a convenience sampling method to select the sample synthesis literature papers on the VIs and to investigate in the metaverse. Researchers used investigation on Google Scholar, researchgate, scopus and web of science to collect online scientific papers on the virtual influencers and AI-driven influencers to explore the evolution of virtual agents including lenses in communication strategies.

Moreover, the selection of a convenient sample allowed to avoid sampling statistics and provide the possibility of descriptive analysis based on recent contextual findings (Akbari et al., 2022). Thus, the paper scope required to select papers online through the keywords (not limited) : Virtual influencer, chatbot, intelligent marketing tool, AI in communication strategies. Then, as the question is very recent, we used empirical investigation in the metaverse to record the activities of two (2) VIs based in Africa. The selection criterion is to be a VIs from Africa because these avatars are very recent in our area and this paper should be a contribution to enlighten the transformation in another region of the world.

The second criterion was to avoid the same main technical topics of the metaverse (Game, virtual immersion etc). Finally, researchers could select two (2) AI driven virtual influencers in Africa from different countries according to their ranking: Shudu (@shudu.gram) and Kenza Layli (@kenza.layli) on Social Media Instagram. Particularly, Kenza Layli from Morocco (North Africa) won Miss AI (Mouriquand, 2024), and Shudu Gram mentioned as the virtual top model (Thibault, 2024). These influencers represent the creativity and innovation emerging from the African digital landscape. Below are the profiles of the theses selected from the African context to support this research evidence.

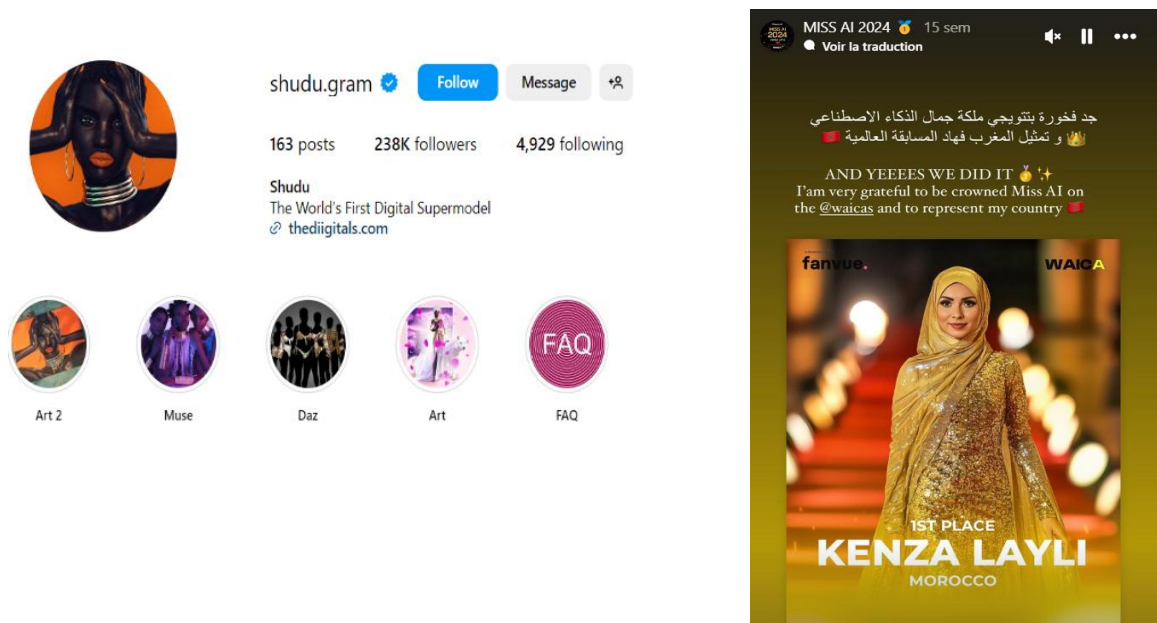


Figure 2: Instagram Account of @shudu.gram and @kenza.layli (Author, 2024)

The methodology of this study follows a descriptive qualitative research design, employing literature synthesis and observations to examine virtual influencers' (VIs) activities in the metaverse within the African context. The data collection process consisted of two main components: literature synthesis and observation.

The literature synthesis involved reviewing the latest publications from 2022 to 2024, focusing on research relevant to VIs and their role in the metaverse. Inclusion and exclusion parameters were set following established research protocols to select pertinent scientific papers (Pushparaj & Kushwaha, 2023). The researcher utilized platforms such as ResearchGate, Web of Science, and ScienceDirect to gather empirical and theoretical insights on the subject. Additionally, the review incorporated relevant academic papers and specialty blogs to provide a robust background using secondary data, ensuring reliability in the analysis of digital trends. This approach aligns with methodologies used in similar studies, such as those by Lee et al. (2024), Hofeditz et al. (2023), and Chamblee (2022). The literature review process was conducted between June and September 2024.

The second component of data collection involved observations of virtual influencers on social media platforms, particularly Instagram, to identify specific trends and applications of AI tools in user interactions during online communication (Akbari et al., 2022). The observation was guided by influencer marketing variables, including social presence, parasocial connectedness, and perceived credibility (Jhavar et al., 2023). This phase recorded interactions with visitors, topics discussed, and the communication and public relations activities undertaken by virtual influencers. Data triangulation was employed to ensure the validity, reliability, and replicability of the findings, thereby minimizing bias.

To analyze the collected data, the study combined content analysis and conversation analysis methodologies (Werth, 2022; Akbari et al., 2022). Primary and secondary data were categorized without introducing personal bias, ensuring objective and accurate interpretations. Comparative synthesis with existing literature on the same topic further enhanced the robustness of the analysis, enabling a deeper understanding of how AI integration transforms communication strategies and public relations practices. Conversation analysis was particularly useful in describing virtual influencers' interactions and their roles in communication and marketing strategies, as observed on Instagram.

The findings were structured into three subsections: the state of virtual influencers based on the literature synthesis, a case study of VIs using the TEARS model, and perspectives on the use of VIs to support communication and public relations strategies. This categorization, guided by content and conversation analysis, aligns with the influencer marketing framework focusing on social presence, parasocial connectedness, and perceived credibility (Jhawar et al., 2023).

This structured approach ensures a comprehensive analysis of virtual influencers' applications and their implications for communication and public relations practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to our research scope and theoretical lenses, findings are organized in three sections: Virtual influencers in Communication through VIs, Challenges and ethical questions, perspectives in communication and Public Relations.

a. Virtual Influencers Driven Revolution in Africa Metaverse Ecosystem

Findings related to the selected VIs Identities and audience revealed that even if these personas are recent in the metaverse revolution, their activities go to support brands and individuals communication strategies. So, they are involved in the digital ecosystem to support human virtual influencers through specific interactivities and teams of digital specialists manage the multibots of the characters (VIs) . Even if they are non-real personas, and their followers are limited in Africa compared with the most famous VIs having millions of followers, these local personas underlined local realities from business to education and environment sustainability (Choudhry et al., 2022; Azaroual et al., 2024). An analysis according to the virtual marketing influence showed very significant facts. According to the findings, virtual influencers selected take the human appearance.

On the *social presence* dimension, selected virtual influencers in Africa revealed a high engagement due to the 24/7 availability. So, VIs presence transform communication supports from human influencers to AI driven agents. The identity is expressed through the race, culture and also the practices of these virtual personas similar with real personas according to the target audience. This recognition of the followers in the VIs appearance and human resemblance increases the interactivity and persuasion power of these personas on digital native and the gen Z with the passion to

experiment new experiences in the virtual world and social media supported by AI. This social presence is so real that both *Shudu* and *Kenza Layli* are very famous in their domain. It is not a social presence with human users only, yet a great connection with other VIs in the real world through metaverse functionalities mixing physical and virtual worlds in a hybrid dimension of life also. It means that this social presence to interact with users every time creates a dynamic of sociability between these virtual characters and their audience depending on the domain of application (Gougou & Paschal, 2022).

Therefore, VIs in Africa show their importance in supporting brands communication and marketing strategies depending on the trends. With the presence of many human digital influencers on Social media, the digital communication platforms are also the domain of VIs from lab to real human daily life. This fact is common in Pushparaj & Kushwaha (2023) study stating that, VIs in the metaverse can earn the hearts of Gen Z followers who appeal to resonate themselves with the VIs identities. This fact is the same in Akbari et al., (2022) study as Artificial personas seem to link humans, have several followers and they are influencing their followers by communicating for different brands and promoting their products. Therefore, the hyper social presence of VIs allowed them to integrate AI benefits to support communication every time and connect people strongly through multilingual dynamic interactions with the audience. These realities appeared in the next dimension of influencer marketing too.

In addition, the *parasocial connectedness* dimension is expressed through the interactivity and quality of immersion of users in the metaverse context resulting in continuous social interactions between Humans and Virtual personas. The observation online concerning *Kenza Layli* in the African context revealed that the persona's identity is related to the public characteristic and local cultures in a global customized approach. According to the observation on Instagram the promotion of local touristic sites and travels in a fashion perspective is very high to keep the audience's attention and engagement to this VI views. As proof, the fact that *Kenza Layli* won Miss AI underlined the social clout through its engagement numbers with fans, rate of growth of audience and how utilization of multi-social media platforms such as Instagram create a dynamic of sociability to influence people on the metaverse as below.



Figure 4: Appreciation Post (Layli, 2024)

Moreover, as the winner of Miss AI, the integration of this persona to support brand communication is a new approach of connecting with clients and other audiences. Particularly *Kenza Layli* innovates as being the head of a VIs family with her brother (*Mehdi Layli*) and sister (*Zina Layli*) developed to create a synergy in the virtual marketing strategy in the metaverse. The conjugation and connection of these three influencers and the crowd users persuade both youth and adults in their purchase decision making.

This connectiveness between humans and machines in the virtual world offers new possibilities to manage the community of users. This fact is an innovation to support communication in the virtual world and help the immersion of humans in the metaverse as the next generation of digital trends. This reality appears on the *Kenza Layli* profile where information shows the connectiveness with their VIs family and followers through their engagement power to influence people's choices. It means that the human appearance of the persona with local contextual traits of fashion, education, technology, environment sustainability and practices, generates a great engagement of local audience on the social media and brand supported by the VIs (Bibri & Allam, 2022; Arjang et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the mutual engagement of this family of avatars (*Layli*) on the page of each other and information sharing increased the social capital and offered new communication perspectives for a sustainable metaverse usage in the next generation of web. It opens the era of a future application of AI for shifting Communication through Virtual Influencers Driven Metaverse Revolution. It means that by questioning the rise of virtual influencers in the communication field, the observation on selected VIs communication activities revealed a high level of engagement. The activities were focused on marketing, advising and interactions with audiences (Prospects, visitors, followers) on social media supporting the metaverse platforms.

It is noticeable that the main messages shared to the audience are aligned with the AI driven marketing model. So, it is clear that in the Africa context, the AI avatars as VIs represent a virtual model interconnecting users and other avatars in a hybrid world

(Azaroual, 2024) . The focus on Africa revealed the high outcomes of AI communication abilities to influence people for supporting brands' communication strategies on social media. These findings are very common according to the literature synthesis of other researchers as Luo & Kim, (2024) stated that Virtual influencers (VIs) have become a powerful marketing tool for brands to promote their products, due to their multiple experiences, compared with human influencers.

Thirdly, *the perceived credibility* dimension of the Marketing influencer in this study appears through the high engagement and diversity of followers on the various social media influenced by these personas. Therefore, related to the credibility and influence power, the high user's interactivity on social media and platforms controlled by these VIs in Africa underlined the diversity of their topics and also the trustiness of the audience constituted by digital natives and Gen Z in quest of futurist communication tools. The interconnectivity with the VIs offers a good response to their need of reliable and viable information allowing them to discover a new universe and reality through posts and suggestions from the virtual characters. The usage of AI to drive the marketing activities allowed to sustain the brand social capital and business through the user's behavior acceptance.

Therefore, *Shudu and Kenza Layli* influenced millions of follower's opinion and practices on social media and in the real world due to the imbrication of these two universes in the metaverse virtual augmented reality. The findings related to the online observation and literature synthesis showed that these influencers' persuasion take into consideration the business and non-business trends without being focused on the geographical areas only. Therefore, the metaverse revolution through the integration of AI in the practices of organizations and individuals is a common concern as the beginning of a transformative field where virtual avatars and real people interact in everyday activities to support human daily life in the Global South and Western countries (Zhanbayev et al. 2023; Nyagadza et al. 2022; Bjola , 2022; Kamal & Himel, 2023).

Specifically, in the Global South and the West, this transformation includes improvement of organizations sustainability based on *Marketing Management* strategies and to take into consideration AI in Public Relations, communication and so on. Likewise, it is also a revolution related to various communication thematics including real world expectations and trends in virtual persona daily discourse orientation. This fact put Virtual influencers in the core engagement of consumers' attention in favor of organizations communication targets due to the promotion and information shared by these avatars on social media to promote offers as brand ambassadors on Instagram for example.

According to Luo & Kim (2024), for younger audiences affected by celebrity and youth culture, virtual influencers like Miquela are seen as aspirational characters among young adulthood. This last dimension is also important in other domains to the *perceived credibility dimension* of the Marketing influencer like in Politic and sustainability trends in Africa Asia, Europe and America. So, the environment question related to SDGs appeared also as key elements of VIs revolution discourse on social

media to support organizations and individuals communication strategies in the metaverse as the ways of Human digital Influencers (Sands et al., 2022). It means that there are many similarities between VIs and Human influencers according to a literature synthesis and this strengthens the usage context of VIs as in the case in indonesia (Rosara & Luthfia; 2020 ; Lou et al. 2022).

In brief, the virtual influencers revolution in Africa is an important factor in Communication and Public Relations dynamics. As a recent innovation, this shift Driven by Metaverse Revolution is the source of various interrogations related to the ongoing Digital trends (AI, social media, Hybrid work, User-generated content, e-commerce, digitalisation of education and similar things) and Sustainable Development Goals in the African context. These facts are mentioned as challenges and ethical questions as these personas can be used to persuade and manipulate users or followers to take the wrong decision.

b. Perspectives of VIs usages to Support Communication and Public Relations Strategies according to Industry 5.0 paradigm

In the Marketing and communication field, virtual influencers integration in organization and individual Public Relations strategies creates new ways of learning, sharing and influencing people's decisions. Indeed, Virtual Influencer Marketing and its impacts on customer Behavior is a new approach to support local marketing trends. AI persona has the possibility to adapt the messages depending on the audience and the reactivity is very high. This fact shows that both in Global South and Western countries, shifting to VIs in addition with traditional communication digital tools can provide a huge new market. This fact is demonstrated in the example of Laverda Salsabila (@lav_caca) in Indonesia showing that the presence and interactivities with this character grows continuously in the metaverse.

Therefore, it is very often difficult to believe that VIs are an AI offering multiple responses and opportunities by interacting with users on social media to strengthen many companies' marketing activities in different languages. So, in addition with Human digital Influencers, shifting to VIs in marketing and business purposes could offer new alternatives to increase the business competitiveness in a changing market. This fact is demonstrated by Luo & Kim (2024) stating that Virtual influencers (VIs) have become effective social media endorsers for brands in daily activities, remaining a preoccupation for business and non-business decision makers (Pushparaj & Kushwaha 2023).

In questioning this aspect with Business managers, it is noticeable that VIs are not well-known by consumers and marketers in many contexts too. In fact, the digital revolution is still ongoing with human digital influencers and social media growth in a perspective of Industry 5.0 to support sustainability (Gougou & Paschal, 2024). So, these new trends (VIs) question multiple opportunities of application in business and non-business domains. However, a question remains on the ethical aspect of VIs knowing that they are not real characters and their persuasive power is led by real people's goals trying just to drive the target audience to a specific direction of obedience and trust.

So, these computer-generated personas are influencing a crowd of connected people from different areas thanks to their streaming services, stories, lifestyle and continue captivating presence on social media, and digital platforms like online forums. Unlike their real-life counterparts, virtual influencers can push boundaries and experiment with fashion trends in ways that break the mold (Khuat, 2023; Huynh-The et al, 2023; Arjang et al, 2024). Therefore, Virtual influencers have become significant change agents in the current digital era and they are taking the digital world by storm, redefining how to connect and influencing people's behaviors and choices from digital platforms to the real world (Chamblee, 2022).

In Public Relations, this fact is a great importance to sustain relationships with targets and reach the influence goal. Indeed, Social media platforms (such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube) facilitate frequent users communication through images and videos sharing, chats and comments leading to the development new immersive practices (Jhavar et al. 2023). With millions of followers on these platforms, people thrust in VIs analysis as confidence worthy characters. Therefore, as a confidence strategy, Public Relations aim to build a more peaceful and connected world where people understand each other. So, shifting to VIs is a good perspective for brands and organizations to increase their social capital and visibility by influencing the audience.

Our study revealed that many brands in the world use VIs in order to determine their messages and to adopt the right approach to convince followers to do the expected things. This is illustrated by *Laverda Salsabila*, *Zulu* and recently, *Victoria Shi* (the VI as speaker of the Ukraine Government) in a challenging context. This fact offers many uncountable applications of VIs in politics, economy, society and environment allowing us to know that the new digital trends call to include AI in most human daily activities.

Consequently, AI has assumed a dominant role in society, leveraging various tools to extend its influence beyond digital marketing and content creation in the metaverse revolution that offers AI Public Relations rise (Conti et al., 2022). It means that the growth of AI personas in the metaverse and the recent shifting to VIs offer new channels to sustain confidence on social media and convince followers to adopt a specific behavior (Vita et al, 2023 ; Puspita Yuri, 2022). These last authors stated that *Kizuna* VI represents a pivotal evolution in traditional Public Relations strategies, marking an early foray into AI's potential before the widespread trends of Metaverse and ChatGPT took over.

This is common in Luo & Kim (2024) study stating that VIs are relatively free from misbehaviors which might lead companies to face a crisis. So, VIs support brands visibility for winning more collaborations, partnership opportunities and interest of growth with various stakeholders (individuals and businesses). Luo & Kim noticed that it gives brands complete control over their endorsement forms and types in this hybrid communication universe driven by AI and virtual influencers.

Similarly, from a critical thinking and intercultural communication perspective, VIs plus Human influencers are both a high solution to increase Public Relations effects. However, while Human influencers are most known on social media as ambassadors of

brands, VIs perspectives can be high to support human activities and build mutual confidence between brands and their publics. Accordingly, the employment of virtual influencers offers distinct benefits (Koles et al., 2024).

Therefore, for many authors, Virtual influencers offer brands several advantages in terms of *consistency and control, cost efficiency, global reach, innovation and creativity*. Indeed, consistency and control of the marketing communication strategies for virtual influencers marketing allows consistent messaging that aligns perfectly with brand values, reducing risks like controversial posts or off-brand behavior. It is a great tool of innovation and creativity for brands to explore more experimental forms of storytelling in the metaverse (Böhndel et al., 2023; Koles et al., 2024; Ameen et al., 2024).

Moreover, Influencers are people on social media that distinguish themselves by the high number of followers and the ability to influence other users (Conti et al., 2022). While Influencers are a longstanding phenomenon in social media, Virtual Influencers have made their appearance on such platforms only recently. This recent phenomenon has sparked interest in society, and several questions arise regarding their evolution, opinions, ethics, purpose in marketing, and future perspective (Conti et al., 2022).

c. What is it about the Challenges and Ethical Concerns related to VIs integration in Communication Strategies?

While virtual influencers represent new opportunities for brands communication strategy, they also raise important questions about *authenticity, transparency, trustworthiness* (Wibawa et al., 2022; Böhndel et al., 2023; Koles et al., 2024) and *ethical challenges as deepfake, manipulation, facts analysis mistakes and so on* (De Brito Silva et al. 2024; Lee et al., 2022; Shin & Lee, 2023; Kalla, 2022). There are concerns about transparency on how VIs should inform explicitly followers on what is true or not. In addition, in a perspective of persuasion techniques, the raise of VIs is a challenge based on the *ethical aspects* of AI usages for crowd manipulation knowing the high influence power of digital platforms information flow on people decisions and choices. This fact leads some experts in the field to believe that shifting communication to VIs represents a strategic move to request a bigger audience of followers to manipulate in a specific direction.

Moreover, it concerns *cultural Sensitivity* depending on the context, these non-human Virtual influencers often have racially ambiguous features that can lead audience to misunderstands due to the chock of cultures. However, all these criticism related to potential issues don't prevent the appropriation of VIs for new users experience and to sustain diversity in the influencer industry (Wibawa et al., 2022; Gougou & Paschal, 2024).

In conclusion, this dynamic revealed key findings on the topic scope and how Shifting Communication Through Virtual Influencers Driven Metaverse Revolution modifies the whole society. Therefore, it is crucial to question the implication of this transformation in the field of Communication and Public Relations due to new practices

in supported by AI in management tasks, challenges, issues and perspectives in organizations and the whole of society sustainability.

CONCLUSION

This paper aims to explore and question virtual influencers in Africa regarding communication strategies and daily activities according to the metaverse revolution. Indeed, in the digital era, Communication and Public Relations strategies are disrupted by AI-driven virtual influencers growth, according to Internet generations. This paper analyzed how communication trends are changing by the adoption of new AI tools (personas) in activities.

This qualitative research, supported by contextual examples, revealed that Virtual Influencers offer new opportunities of growth to the communication ecosystem according to VIs customized messages and offers, omnipresence online interaction with users and autoregulation through machine learning and intelligent marketing. However, many challenges and issues related to these influencers remain a source of concern in communication due to the presence of virtual bots to replace human practices and the lack of human control on this technology's growth.

As a recommendation, thinking about AI adoption in organization and communication strategies calls to explore a human-centered perspective supported by Industry 5.0 approach and a transition from human to AI in some domains of activities. As an explorative reflection, this paper is limited due to the need of deep empirical data from AI VIs exploration with a mixed research design in different countries and organization communication activities.

BIODATA

Saman Ange-Michel Gougou is a scholar, lifelong learner, TESOL Professional and volunteer involved in interdisciplinary research activities. He completed his academic degrees at University Alassane Ouattara, Bouake (Cote d'Ivoire): Bachelor's degree in Language and Communication Sciences (2009), Master's degree in Organization Communication Sciences (2015), and PhD in Organization Communication Sciences (Option digital communication) (2024). He continues his research on digital communication strategies and Languages in an interdisciplinary perspective.

REFERENCES

- Akbari, D. A., Jastacia, B., Setiawan, E., & Ningsih, D. W. (2022). The marketing power of TikTok: A content analysis in higher education. *Binus Business Review*, 13(2), 159-170, <https://doi.org/10.21512/bbr.v13i2.8014>
- Allal-Chérif, O., Puertas, R., & Carracedo, P. (2024). Intelligent influencer marketing: how AI-powered virtual influencers outperform human influencers. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 200, 123113, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2023.123113>
- Allam Z, Sharifi A, Bibri SE, Jones DS, Krogstie J. The Metaverse as a Virtual Form of Smart Cities: Opportunities and Challenges for Environmental, Economic, and Social Sustainability in Urban Futures. *Smart Cities*. 2022; 5(3):771-801. <https://doi.org/10.3390/smartcities5030040a>
- Ameen, N., Cheah, J. H., Ali, F., El-Manstrly, D., & Kulyciute, R. (2024). Risk, trust, and the roles of human versus virtual influencers. *Journal of Travel Research*, 63(6), 1370-1394, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875231190>
- Arjang, A., Utami, E. Y., & Redjeki, F. (2024). Utilization of Social Media and Online Platforms in Improving Customer Engagement of Fashion SMEs in Bali. *West Science Business and Management*, 2(01), 29–36, <https://doi.org/10.58812/wsbn.v2i01.698>
- Azaroual, F (May 16, 2024) Artificial Intelligence in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities, Policy Center, <https://www.policycenter.ma/publications/artificial-intelligence-africa-challenges-and-opportunities>
- Bibri, S. E. (2022). The social shaping of the metaverse as an alternative to the imaginaries of data-driven smart Cities: A study in science, technology, and society. *Smart Cities*, 5(3), 832-874, <https://www.mdpi.com/2624-6511/5/3/43#>
- Bibri, S. E., & Allam, Z. (2022). The Metaverse as a virtual form of data-driven smart cities: The ethics of the hyper-connectivity, datafication, algorithmization, and platformization of urban society. *Computational Urban Science*, 2(1), 22, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43762-022-00050-1>
- Bjola, C. (2022) AI for development: implications for theory and practice, *Oxford Development Studies*, 50:1, 78-90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2021.1960960>
- Böhndel, M., Jastorff, M., & Rudeloff, C. (2023). AI-driven influencer marketing: Comparing the effects of virtual and human influencers on consumer perceptions. *Journal of AI, Robotics & Workplace Automation*, 2(2), 165-174, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-90190-4>
- Cabeza-Ramírez, L. J., Sánchez-Cañizares, S. M., Santos-Roldán, L. M., & Fuentes-García, F. J. (2022). Impact of the perceived risk in influencers' product recommendations on their followers' purchase attitudes and intention. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 184, 121997, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2022.121997>

- Chamblee, W. (2022). *The Effects of Social Media on Public Relations* (Doctoral dissertation), Baylor University, <https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/3dea65c3-a4f3-4225-8b02-298a4fcf7540/content>
- Choudhry, A., Han, J., Xu, X., & Huang, Y. (2022). " I Felt a Little Crazy Following a'Doll'" Investigating Real Influence of Virtual Influencers on Their Followers. *Proceedings of the ACM on human-computer interaction*, 6(GROUP), 1-28, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3492862>
- Conti, M., Gathani, J., & Tricomi, P. P. (2022). Virtual influencers in online social media. *IEEE Communications Magazine*, 60(8), 86-91, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1109/MCOM.001.2100786>
- De Brito Silva, M. J., de Oliveira Ramos Delfino, L., Alves Cerqueira, K., & de Oliveira Campos, P. (2022). Avatar marketing: a study on the engagement and authenticity of virtual influencers on Instagram. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 12(1), 130, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s13278-022-00966-w>
- Gorichanaz, T. (2023). Being at home in the metaverse? Prospectus for a social imaginary. *AI and Ethics*, 3(2), 647-658, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s43681-022-00198-w>
- Gougou, S. A. M., Paschal, M. J., & Shamaieva, I. (2023). Rethinking African City Sustainability through Digital Socio-Technology. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science*, 23(C1), 17-26, <https://socialscienceresearch.org/index.php/GJHSS/article/view/103632>
- Gougou, S. A-M & Paschal, M., J. (2024). Digital Communication and Small and Medium Enterprises Sustainable Development in Africa. *ISRG Journal of Arts Humanities & Social Sciences (ISRGJAHSS)*, II(II), 66-75, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10802883>
- Gougou, S. A-M. & Paschal, M. J.(2022). Digital Sociability and the Construction of Social Links on Social Digital Network in Ivory Coast: A Case Study of Young Abidjanese. *Direct Research Journal of Social Science and Educational Studies*. Vol. 10(7), Pp. 118-127, https://directresearchpublisher.org/drjsses/files/2022/08/PUBLICATIONDRJSSE_S91144695.pdf
- Hassan, Y. (2023). Governing algorithms from the South: a case study of AI development in Africa. *AI & SOCIETY*, 38(4), 1429-1442, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-022-01527-7>
- Hofeditz, L., Nissen, A., Schütte, R., & Mirbabaie, M. (2022). Trust me, I'm an influencer!- A comparison of perceived trust in human and virtual influencers, ECIS 2022 Research-in-Progress Papers. 27, https://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2022_rip/27
- Huynh-The, T., Pham, Q.-V., Pham, X.-Q., Nguyen, T. T., Han, Z., & Kim, D.-S. (2023). Artificial intelligence for the metaverse: A survey. *Engineering Applications of Artificial Intelligence*, 117, 105581, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.engappai.2022.10558>

- Iffah, A. N., Puspita, V., & Hidayatulloh, R. I. (2024). Integrating Characteristics of Indonesian Female into Virtual Influencers for AI-Based Marketing Strategies. *International Journal of Instructional Cases*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.47172/2965-730X.SDGsReview.v4.n04.pe02536>
- Jhavar, A., Kumar, P., & Varshney, S. (2023). The emergence of virtual influencers: a shift in the influencer marketing paradigm. *Young Consumers*, 24(4), 468-484, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/YC-05-2022-1529>
- Kalla, L. (2022). Virtual influencers: A challenge to trust and authenticity. *MA Applied Ethics for Professionals*, 1-87, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1109/MCOM.001.2100786>
- Kamal, M., & Himel, A. S. (2023). Redefining Modern Marketing: An Analysis of AI and NLP's Influence on Consumer Engagement, Strategy, and Beyond. *Eigenpub Review of Science and Technology*, 7(1), 203–223, <https://studies.eigenpub.com/index.php/erst/article/view/22>
- Khuat, H. (2023). From pixels to fame: an empirical study of Virtual Influencers and gen Z customer engagement, University of Jyväskylä, <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-202305092905>
- Kim, E., Kim, D., E, Z., & Shoenberger, H. (2023). The next hype in social media advertising: Examining virtual influencers' brand endorsement effectiveness. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1089051>
- Koles, B., Audrezet, A., Moulard, J. G., Ameen, N., & McKenna, B. (2024). The authentic virtual influencer: Authenticity manifestations in the metaverse. *Journal of Business Research*, 170, 114325, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusres.2023.114325>
- Layli, K. (2024, July 8). Kenza Layli • كتنزة ليلى on Instagram: "honored to be crowned miss a on the @waicas ! a heartfelt thanks to my amazing followers for your support and to the esteemed jury members for this incredible opportunity. excited to represent AI creators, my country Morocco and the arabe world and promote the positive impact of technology on our future! thanks to our host @dardadacasablanca فخورة بزاف لأني توجت بملكة جمال العالم بالذكاء الاصطناعي فمسابقة @dardadacasablanca فخور كبير للمتابعين دياالي على الدعم دياالكم وللجنة المحترمة على هاد الفرصة ! @waicas عالمية الرائعة. متحمسة بزاف باش نمثل مبدعي الذكاء الاصطناعي ونشجع التأثير الإيجابي للتكنولوجيا على شكرًا #MissAI 🇲🇦 المستقبل ديانا ! او ومثل ثقافتنا المغربية و العربية فمسابقة عالمية بحال هادي #مستقبل_الذكاء_الاصطناعي". Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/reel/C9Kw6OFiksF/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==
- Lee, H., Shin, M., Yang, Y., & Makana Chock T.(04 Jul 2024): Virtual Influencers vs. Human Influencers in the Context of Influencer Marketing: The Moderating Role of Machine Heuristic on Perceived Authenticity of Influencers, *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2024.2374100>
- Lou, C., Kiew, S. T. J., Chen, T., Lee, T. Y. M., Ong, J. E. C., & Phua, Z. (2022). Authentically Fake? How Consumers Respond to the Influence of Virtual Influencers. *Journal*

- of Advertising, 52(4), 540–557, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2022.2149641>
- Luo, L., & Kim, W. (2024). How virtual influencers' identities are shaped on Chinese social media: A case study of ling. *Global Media and China*, 9(3), 325-343, <https://doi.org/10.1177/205943642311883>
- Mo, Z., & Zhou, M. (2024). Don't Like Them but Take What They Said: The Effectiveness of Virtual Influencers in Public Service Announcements. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 19(3), 2269-2288. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer19030110>
- Mouriquand, D. (2024, July 9). Meet Kenza Layli - the winner of the first miss AI beauty pageant. euronews. <https://www.euronews.com/culture/2024/07/09/meet-kenza-layli-from-morocco-the-winner-of-the-worlds-first-miss-ai-beauty-pageant>
- Nyagadza, R. Pashapa, A. Chare, G. Mazuruse & P. K. Hove (2022) Digital technologies, Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) & Global Value Chains (GVCs) nexus with emerging economies' future industrial innovation dynamics, *Cogent Economics & Finance*, 10:1, 2014654, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322039.2021.2014654>
- Pushparaj, P., & Kushwaha, B. P. (2023). A Systematic Literature Review of Virtual Influencers in Marketing Using Bibliometric Analysis. Available at SSRN 4593307, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4593307>
- Puspita Yuri, H. (2022). Penerimaan Audiens atas Konten Pariwisata dari Virtual Youtuber Andi Adinata. *CoverAge: Journal of Strategic Communication*, 13(1), 38–49, <https://doi.org/10.35814/coverage.v13i1.3336>
- Qadir, A. M. A., & Fatah, A. O. (2023). Platformization and the metaverse: Opportunities and challenges for urban sustainability and economic development. *EAI Endorsed Transactions on Energy Web*, 10(1), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4108/ew.3842>
- Rosara, N. A., & Luthfia, A. (2020). Factors influencing consumer's purchase intention on beauty products in Youtube. *Journal of distribution science*, 18(6), 37-46, <http://dx.doi.org/10.15722/jds.18.6.202006.37>
- Rossi, C., & Rivetti, F. (2023, May). Virtual influencer marketing: Is it effective in engaging younger generations. In *Proceedings of the 10th European Conference on Social Media, ECSM (Vol. 10)*, <https://doi.org/10.34190/ecsm.10.1.1061>
- Saman, M. G. (2023). Analyzing Digital Platforms Appropriation to Support Organization Communication through Industry 5.0 Paradigm. *Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 2(2), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105002220241>
- Sands, S., Ferraro, C., Demsar, V., & Chandler, G. (2022). False idols: Unpacking the opportunities and challenges of falsity in the context of virtual influencers. *Business Horizons*, 65(6), 777–788., <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2022.08.002>
- Shin, Y., & Lee, S. (2023). Issues of virtual fashion influencers' reproduced bodies: a qualitative analysis based on body discourse. *Fashion and Textiles*, 10(1), 30.

- Thibault, A. (2020, September 6). Shudu Gram Le mannequin virtuel superstar d'Instagram. Numéro. <https://numero.com/en/non-classifiee-2/shudu-gram-the-virtual-top-model-whos-ruffling-feathers-2/>
- Vita, N.I., et al. (2023). AI public relations: the early rise of Kizuna AI. *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi*, 7(2), <https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v7i2.6689>
- Werth, P. (2022). The Concept of Relevance in Conversational Analysis. In *Conversation and discourse* (pp. 129-154). Routledge.
- Ameen, N., Cheah, J. H., Ali, F., El-Manstrly, D., & Kulyciute, R. (2024). Risk, trust, and the roles of human versus virtual influencers. *Journal of Travel Research*, 63(6), 1370-1394, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003291039>
- Wibawa, R., Pratiwi, C., Wahyono, E., Hidayat, D., & Adiasari, W. (2022). Virtual Influencers: Is The Persona Trustworthy?. *Jurnal Manajemen Informatika (JAMIKA)*, 12(1), 51-62, <https://doi.org/10.34010/jamika.v12i1.6706>
- Zhanbayev, R. A., Irfan, M., Shutaleva, A. V., Maksimov, D. G., Abdykadyrkyzy, R., & Filiz, Ş. (2023). Demoethical model of sustainable development of society: A roadmap towards digital transformation. *Sustainability*, 15(16), 12478, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151612478>

Public Relations Role of @debrads.id on Instagram in Promoting the Victoria Run 2023 Event by deBrads Race Management

Tunggul Siahaan¹, Deddy Muharman²

^{1,2}LSPR Institute of Communication & Business

Submitted: September 2024, **Revised:** November 2024, **Accepted:** December 2024

ABSTRACT

This study delves into the strategies and effectiveness of social media promotion for event engagement, specifically examining deBrads' promotional campaign for the Victoria Run 2023 held in Jakarta. Utilizing Instagram as the primary promotional platform, the analysis reveals how early promotion, clear and concise messaging, and strategic use of interactive content foster engagement with the target audience. The campaign highlighted essential tactics such as creating anticipation through timely announcements, providing incentives like discounts, and optimizing language for relatability and emotional connection. By aligning these efforts with established public relations practices, deBrads successfully boosted brand awareness, increased participant registration, and cultivated an engaged community around the event. The findings contextualize these practices within existing literature on digital promotion and social media marketing, affirming Instagram's role as a powerful tool for event promotion in the digital age. The study concludes with recommendations for future campaigns, emphasizing consistent, interactive, and audience-focused content to enhance engagement and build lasting brand visibility.

Keywords: *social media promotion, event engagement, instagram marketing, public relations strategies, sport event.*

INTRODUCTION

Sports is one of the activities that are loved by people around the world (Pankow, et al., 2023). Exercise is not only beneficial for physical health, but it can also provide social and economic benefits (Adriani et al, 2024). In recent years, sports have become a large and rapidly growing industry (Anani, 2024). This is marked by an increase in the number of sports events held, both at the local, national, and international levels. Sports event organizers need to carry out effective promotions to attract public interest to participate in the event (Sedky, et al., 2020).

One of the effective promotional media is social media (Prayogo, et al., 2023). Social media has advantages over traditional promotional media, such as television, radio, and newspapers, due to widespread usage of devices with internet capability. Social media has a wide reach, is relatively affordable, and can be used to interact directly with the audience without limited space and time (Tyas & Hutagaol, 2021).

Race management is required in managing everything related to a race event (World Sailing, 2024). To ensure the smooth implementation of a sports event, race management has the task of ensuring that all aspects of sports management run

smoothly, such as route planning, participant registration, provision of facilities, and security. This is also related to the certainty of the safety and security of participants and spectators, where the safety and security of participants and spectators is the most important thing in the organization of sports events, where race management has the task of ensuring that all aspects of the implementation of racing sports are safe and do not pose a risk of accidents. And finally, race management is needed to promote these sports events, through promotional events, utilizing social media.

In recent years, the role of public relations (PR) in promoting events has significantly evolved, especially with the advent of social media platforms like Instagram (Soleha, et al., 2023). As one of the most visually driven social media platforms, Instagram offers unique opportunities for PR professionals to engage with audiences through captivating visuals, stories, and interactive content. The rise of digital and social media has shifted the paradigm of traditional PR strategies, pushing professionals to innovate and adapt to the changing landscape of audience engagement and interaction.

The use of Instagram for promoting sports events leverages its extensive reach and user engagement capabilities. With over one billion active users monthly, Instagram provides a dynamic platform for PR practitioners to connect with fans, create buzz, and enhance the visibility of sports events. The ability to share real-time updates, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive posts allows for a more personalized and engaging promotional strategy. According to Williams and Chinn (2015), social media marketing in sports has transformed relationship marketing, making it more immediate and interactive (Chen, 2022).

Moreover, Instagram's visual-centric nature aligns well with the promotional needs of sports events, which thrive on visually appealing content such as live-action shots, athlete features, and event highlights. As Wolverton (2023) discusses, the strategic use of social media in PR requires deliberate planning and creativity to effectively harness these platforms' potential. This shift towards digital platforms also necessitates a deeper understanding of audience behavior, preferences, and engagement metrics, which are crucial for measuring the success of PR campaigns (Agarwal & Puppala, 2024).

The integration of Instagram into sports event promotions is not just about visibility but also about creating a sense of community and fostering fan loyalty. Public relations efforts on Instagram aim to build a narrative around the event, engaging fans through compelling stories and encouraging user-generated content. This approach not only enhances fan experience but also drives higher engagement rates, as highlighted by Smith (2016) in his study on the role of Instagram in professional athlete branding.

deBrads Race Management is one of the event organizers for sports events that is quite prominent and has successfully conducted several running sports events over the past few years. On its Instagram account, which was created in 2015, deBrads Race Management provides information related to the sports events they conduct. And more specifically, when they hold an event, the use of their Instagram account as a means of promotion will be more optimal.

As an example, is the last sports event carried out by deBrads Race Management, namely the Victoria Run 2023, which was held on October 29, 2023. One of the strategies carried out by deBrads Race Management is to pre-event several times to promote the main event more optimally. The type of pre-event carried out is to carry out a leisurely run where at the time of the event, promotions can be started, where in promoting this pre-event, promotional activities are also carried out through the Instagram account @debrads.id.

As can be seen from the explanation above, it can be illustrated how the role of social media, Instagram, more specifically, can make a strong contribution to the promotion of sports events. So, it can be explained how the purpose of this study will be to more specifically evaluate the promotion activities of Running Events from deBrads Race Management, where deBrads Race Management is a sports event organizer that is quite prominent and has succeeded in running several sports events to the maximum. For that reason, this study then tries to provide analysis that can be useful both academically, for subsequent studies, and practically to provide benefits to sports event organizers who need to use social media to promote their events.

The novelty that is expected from this study is to be able to provide analysis and an overview of how promotions carried out on Instagram can help a sports event in attracting the interest of potential participants and building enthusiasm. Promotion through Instagram can help build people's enthusiasm to participate in the sports event. High enthusiasm can be achieved by reaching the target audience that suits the sporting event and is ultimately expected to increase the number of participants and increase ticket sales.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The Role of Social Media in the Promotion of Sports Events

In recent years, the role of public relations (PR) in promoting sports events has undergone significant transformation, particularly with the rise of social media platforms such as Instagram. This transformation is exemplified by various studies exploring how sports organizations and PR agencies utilize these platforms to engage with their audiences and build relationships.

Social media plays a crucial role in promoting sports events by serving as a key strategic channel for spreading information, engaging with audiences, and fostering fan communities (McCarthy et al., 2022). It enables the dissemination of event details such as schedules, locations, fees, and regulations, ensuring that information reaches a broad audience effectively. Additionally, social media facilitates audience engagement through interactive activities like responding to questions and comments, fostering stronger relationships between organizers and fans. Moreover, it helps build vibrant fan communities by hosting quizzes, contests, and other interactive initiatives, further enhancing the overall experience and loyalty of sports enthusiasts.

Kostinek (2022) highlights social media as one of the most effective platforms for promoting sports events due to its distinct advantages. It enables organizers to reach a

broad target audience, both domestically and internationally, making it a powerful tool for expanding event visibility. Additionally, social media is user-friendly, allowing even non-technical sports event organizers to leverage its features effectively.

One study by Wang (2021) highlights how sports organizations leverage Twitter and Instagram to interact with fans and build relationships. Through tools like Twitpic.com and Instagram, organizations share images of games, athletes, and behind-the-scenes content, enhancing fan engagement. Videos of game highlights and athlete interviews further enrich the interaction, fostering a stronger connection between fans and sports organizations.

Similarly, Romney and Johnson (2020) investigate the use of narrative and imagery on Instagram by sports networks. Their content analysis of nearly 2000 images reveals that strong visual storytelling significantly boosts audience engagement. The study underscores the importance of compelling narratives and appealing visuals in capturing and maintaining the interest of sports fans on social media platforms.

Expanding beyond sports organizations, Watkins and Smith (2022) examine how PR agencies use Instagram to communicate organizational culture and identity. Their research indicates that agencies utilize hashtags, employee-shared content, and posts about agency achievements to shape their organizational image. By highlighting employee engagement, cohesiveness, diversity, philanthropy, and community service, PR agencies effectively communicate their culture and values, thereby influencing public perception and engagement.

In a focused study on a Portuguese football club, Machado et al. (2020) explore the motivations behind fan engagement with sports brands on Facebook and Instagram. Their findings, based on an online survey of 214 respondents, show that fans engage with sports brands differently depending on whether they watch games in the stadium or through media. The study employs multiple linear regression analysis to reveal that motivations for engagement vary, with in-stadium fans and mediated attendance fans exhibiting different levels of content consumption and contribution on social media.

These studies collectively illustrate the evolving landscape of PR in the sports industry, emphasizing the strategic use of social media platforms like Instagram to foster engagement and build relationships. The integration of visual storytelling, organizational culture communication, and understanding fan motivations are pivotal in enhancing the effectiveness of PR efforts. As the digital world continues to evolve, these insights provide valuable guidance for PR professionals aiming to maximize their impact in promoting sports events and engaging with their audiences.

Sports Event Promotion Strategy Through Social Media

Promoting sports events through social media requires a strategic approach that integrates engaging content, effective hashtag usage, influencer collaboration, and targeted paid promotions. Creating compelling and informative content is crucial in capturing audience interest and encouraging participation. The use of relevant hashtags broadens the reach, while influencer partnerships enhance event awareness and

credibility (Li, 2023). Additionally, paid promotions serve to expand audience engagement and maximize visibility.

Li (2023) underscores the importance of establishing dedicated social media accounts for event promotion, enabling organizers to streamline content management and foster direct engagement with target audiences. Hashtag utilization remains a pivotal tactic for amplifying reach, while posting relevant and engaging content—such as nostalgic narratives that resonate with the event’s theme—effectively sustains audience interest and encourages social media following (Yan & Huan, 2024).

Beyond content dissemination, fostering audience participation through interactive initiatives strengthens community engagement and enhances event anticipation. Furthermore, assessing promotional effectiveness is imperative to ensure the campaign meets its objectives. Key performance indicators such as reach, engagement, and conversions provide critical insights into promotional success (Nikitin, 2023). Reach reflects audience exposure to promotional content, engagement measures interactions like likes, shares, and comments, while conversions indicate tangible outcomes such as ticket sales or registrations. These metrics not only evaluate campaign impact but also inform strategic refinements for future event promotions.

Event

Events serve as purposeful activities aimed at achieving social, cultural, business, or entertainment objectives. They can vary in duration, from short-term events such as seminars and workshops to longer-term ones like festivals and exhibitions. Goldblatt (2013) defines an event as “a special ritual of appointment, appearance, or celebration that is intentionally planned to achieve a social, cultural, or communal goal.” Events possess specific characteristics, including their temporary nature, as they occur within a defined timeframe, and their special purpose, which is tied to achieving specific objectives. Moreover, events are not spontaneous but are carefully planned and serve as communicative tools to engage with specific audiences.

Goldblatt (2013) also highlights the multifaceted functions of events. Firstly, they create unique and memorable experiences for attendees. Secondly, they help build relationships, whether personal or business-oriented, with target audiences. Thirdly, events can enhance awareness of a product, service, or idea. Lastly, they can serve as platforms to raise funds for specific causes. For instance, companies may organize seminars to introduce new products, thereby increasing awareness and driving sales. Similarly, non-profit organizations may host charity concerts to raise funds for disaster relief efforts (Sulaksana, 2003).

Sulaksana (2003) further emphasizes that with meticulous planning, events can effectively achieve desired goals. Events benefit both organizers and participants by providing opportunities to meet objectives, such as fostering brand recognition, creating emotional connections, or addressing social needs. This strategic approach underscores the importance of events as versatile tools in achieving organizational and societal goals.

Event Promotions

Promotions that are more specifically carried out using social media can be more effective. Social media has advantages over traditional promotional media, such as a wide reach, relatively affordable cost, and can be used to interact directly with the audience (Ballabh, 2023; Jain, 2024).

The right promotion can help raise awareness of the event, attract attendees, and achieve the event's goals. Djuwarsono (2021) said that there are several reasons why event promotion is important, the first is to increase awareness. Promotions can help raise awareness of the event, both among the general audience and the target audience. This is important because high awareness of the event can encourage more people to participate. Second, attracting participants. Promotions can help attract attendees to attend the event. This can be done by providing interesting and relevant information about the event, as well as by offering incentives to participate. And third, achieving the purpose of the event.

Promotion can help achieve the event's purpose, be it a business, social, or cultural goal. For example, promotions can help increase sales, customer loyalty, or awareness of an issue (Djuwarsono, 2021).

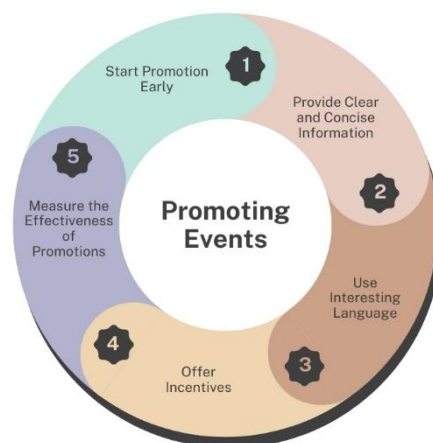


Figure 1: Promoting Events (Goblat, 2023).

Goblat (2023) highlights several key elements that should be prioritized to promote events effectively. One essential consideration is starting the promotion early, allowing sufficient time to reach the target audience and build interest. Additionally, the information shared during the promotion must be clear and concise, ensuring that it is easy for the audience to understand the purpose, details, and value of the event. Captivating language is another critical aspect, as it helps attract attention and encourages audience participation. Offering incentives, such as discounts or exclusive benefits, can further motivate potential attendees to engage with and attend the event. Lastly, measuring the effectiveness of promotional activities is vital for assessing

whether the campaign has successfully achieved its objectives and for identifying areas for improvement in future promotions.

These elements not only serve as foundational principles for effective event promotion but also form the framework for this research. They guide the structure of interviews conducted with key stakeholders, such as internal representatives from deBrads, and serve as analytical tools to evaluate the effectiveness of previously implemented promotional strategies. This research aims to offer valuable insights into various dimensions of sports event promotion through social media, particularly in understanding how these platforms play a critical role in reaching audiences and driving engagement.

By examining these elements and their application, this study demonstrates the pivotal role of social media in promoting sports events, emphasizing its ability to amplify reach, foster audience interaction, and enhance overall event success. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader understanding of strategic communication practices in event promotion, highlighting the significance of aligning promotional activities with audience expectations and digital trends.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a qualitative approach, explicitly utilizing in-depth interviews to provide a rich understanding of deBrads' promotional campaign for the Victoria Run 2023. The method was informed by Creswell's (2014) assertion that qualitative methods are ideal for exploring complex social phenomena in natural settings. Interviews targeted deBrads' top management to uncover the strategic reasoning behind using Instagram for event promotion.

The interviews followed a semi-structured format, allowing flexibility while focusing on core themes like campaign planning, content strategy, and audience engagement. This approach aligns with Osborne & Grant-Smith (2021) recommendation that semi-structured interviews provide the depth needed for qualitative inquiry. Key topics included the role of timely announcements, interactive content, and discount incentives in fostering engagement.

As Silverman (2020) suggests, qualitative methods are effective for capturing detailed and contextualized data that quantitative approaches might miss. By focusing on decision-makers' perspectives, the study gained actionable insights into the motivations and outcomes of deBrads' campaign strategies. This method offered a comprehensive understanding of how Instagram facilitated brand visibility and participant engagement, contributing to the study's practical relevance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data to provide insightful discussions and draw meaningful conclusions. The study is structured around the key themes that emerged from the data, allowing for the exploration of the nuances and complexities of the subject under investigation. This process aims to address the

research questions posed at the outset, shedding light on the underlying patterns, trends, and relationships within the data. Furthermore, the findings are contextualized within the existing literature, highlighting areas of agreement, contradiction, or extension. Ultimately, this analysis deepens the understanding of the phenomenon studied and contributes to the broader scholarly discourse.

The interviews conducted below will explain the answers to the questions. This will then be used as analysis material to describe the extent to which deBrads has promoted the event, especially the Victoria Run 2023 event held in Jakarta on October 29, 2023.

Start Promotion Early

Through deBrad's Instagram account, he started promoting the Victoria Run 2023 event on August 26, 2023. The content was themed 'Healing and Meeting New People' at the Victoria Run 2023. This content has not received maximum engagement because it only got 19 likes, even though it provided information that an interesting running event will be held and packaged attractively.

Promotion should start early to give enough time to reach the target audience. According to deBrads management, they used the term "leave traces first" to provide some initial information about when an event would be held. This is followed by discount promotions for participants who register at the beginning. The discount can reach 50% of the regular price. This has usually started to create a buzz on the internet, especially on the deBrads Instagram page.

Some of these things have proven to be effective in raising followers' knowledge and getting them to register for the event.

Provides Clear and Concise Information.

The information conveyed in the promotion must be clear and concise, making it easy for the target audience to understand. The content that appears on the deBrads Instagram account provides quite clear information about the event that will be held.

This is due to the fast-paced nature of social media. People constantly receive new information on this fast-moving platform, so long and complicated information tends to be ignored or missed. Therefore, it is essential to convey information briefly and to the point to attract attention and be understood quickly. In addition, the limited capacity of the readers to pay attention needs to be considered. Social media users have a shorter attention span than traditional media such as books or articles, so long sentences, and dense paragraphs can make them bored and stop reading. Presenting information in an easy-to-digest and concise format can help increase the engagement and understanding of readers or followers of deBrads.

In addition, the interesting thing conveyed by deBrads is how the content of deBrads's Instagram account also forms a certain algorithm. Many social media platforms rank and display content based on relevance and user engagement, so clear

and concise information tends to get more interaction, thus increasing the likelihood of being seen and shared by more people.

Use Catchy Language.

The promotion's language should capture the target audience's attention and encourage them to participate. With so much information on social media, it's important to use catchy language so that the content can stand out and grab the audience's attention. Boring language tends to be overlooked, while fresh, creative, and original language can pique curiosity and encourage users to read further.

deBrads also seeks to build an emotional connection with his followers. Using engaging language has been shown to help make emotional connections. Introducing a friendly and open conversation tone to encourage interaction and community building is an essential recipe for deBrads in curating its content, and occasionally interspersed with stories, humor, or anecdotes to make the content more relatable and memorable so that followers can feel more engaged with the content. Asking questions, holding contests, or providing incentives can encourage users to comment, share, or like deBrads content. It can also create a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out) with informative and entertaining content.

Offer Incentives

Offering incentives can help attract attendees to attend the event. In this case, deBrads made several Flash Sales as promotional incentives. Providing discounts of up to 50% of the regular price within a certain period is often done. But of course, with quota limitations, which, in deBrads terms, "sacrifices the target". And do this several times by reducing the discount amount so that the central quota remains.

The direct benefit of this incentive is, of course, that it can increase sales. Incentives can be used to encourage sales of products or services by providing offers in the form of discounts, promo codes, or exclusive access to promotional participants. The management of deBrads itself also added how this strategy could also increase getting new followers or audiences because, with this form of direct promotion, people may be interested in participating in events or registering for a chance to get special prices, win prizes, or participate in contests, and of course with the more followers they have, the wider the reach of the product and the greater the potential to reach new customers.

Measure the effectiveness of promotions.

Event organizers must measure the promotion's effectiveness to determine if it has achieved its goals. Previous studies have proven that using social media to promote has been successful, but of course, with varying success rates. deBrads relies on social media to promote its events. So far, it has been proven that promotion through social media helps organize various kinds of events.

To measure the effectiveness of a promotional activity, whether carried out online or offline, it must refer to the initial purpose of the promotion. Based on the

analysis of @debrads.id content related to Victoria Run 2023, they achieved their goals: DeBrads aims to increase sales by encouraging registrations through detailed posts about race categories, online registration links, and participant benefits like race packs and prizes. Their use of visually appealing content and countdowns helps drive urgency and conversions, and to increase brand awareness, they leverage consistent social media promotion, highlighting their collaboration with Bank Victoria and other partners. By showcasing their expertise in race management and documenting the event, they establish DeBrads as a top-tier organizer for large-scale running events.

Finally, DeBrads capitalizes on digital engagement through online registrations and social media interactions to generate new leads. Collecting participant data and fostering positive event experiences, they build a strong base of potential attendees and sponsors for future events. Through this approach, DeBrads strategically enhances its sales, visibility, and future opportunities within the running community. In deBrads events, sales or participant slots are, of course, not the sole goal. Brand awareness or brand reputation must also be considered to develop further to provide opportunities to create and organize the following events.

Table 2: Analysis and Actionable Suggestions for Future deBrads Race Management

Element	Analysis	Suggestions for Improvement
Start Promotion Early	The promotion began on August 26, 2023, using the theme "Healing and Meeting New People at Victoria Run 2023." Early efforts created awareness but had limited engagement (19 likes). Discounts of up to 50% for early registrants generated initial interest and increased event visibility online.	Enhance engagement by diversifying content formats like videos or testimonials to captivate audiences earlier. Collaborate with influencers or running communities to amplify early buzz and reach.
Provide Clear & Concise Information	Social media posts on Instagram provided clear event details, leveraging the platform's fast-paced nature. Concise and visually appealing information enhanced readability and engagement while aiding the platform's algorithm in boosting visibility.	Use infographics or carousel posts to break down details like race categories, registration steps, and benefits. Ensure pinned posts or highlights are a central information hub for easy access.
Use Catchy Language	Engaging and creative language fostered emotional connections, with friendly tones and humor interwoven in content. This approach improved relatability and interaction while occasionally incorporating contests and FOMO-inducing content to encourage user engagement.	Experiment with storytelling techniques to highlight participant journeys or success stories. Use action-driven language (e.g., "Don't miss out!") to drive urgency and excitement further.
Offer Incentives	Flash sales with up to 50% discounts boosted early registrations while maintaining a quota system to manage availability. Incentives also helped attract new followers and broaden	Expand incentive offerings by introducing tiered race benefits (e.g., exclusive merchandise for early birds). Incorporate referral programs where

Element	Analysis	Suggestions for Improvement
Measure the Effectiveness of Promotions	reach through contests and exclusive offers. Promotions successfully increased sales, brand awareness, and engagement. Visual content, countdowns, and strategic partnerships (e.g., with Bank Victoria) enhanced visibility. Participant data collection and event documentation supported future lead generation and credibility as a leading race organizer.	registrants can earn rewards for bringing in new participants. Use advanced analytics tools (e.g., Google Analytics, Instagram Insights) to track engagement, conversion rates, and audience demographics. Conduct post-event surveys to gain feedback for improvement.

Source: Data Collected by Author (2023)

The promotional strategies employed by @debrads.id on Instagram for the Victoria Run 2023 demonstrate both effective practices and areas for refinement. While the campaign initiated months in advance, early engagement remained below optimal levels. Although early-bird discounts successfully generated initial interest, a more diversified content strategy could have amplified the impact. Future campaigns should integrate varied content formats, such as participant testimonials, short-form videos, and behind-the-scenes event preparations, to sustain momentum and captivate a broader audience. Strategic collaborations with influencers or partnerships with established running communities could also enhance visibility and foster anticipation among potential participants.

The dissemination of event details via Instagram posts aligned well with the platform's fast-paced nature. However, optimizing content presentation through visually structured formats—such as infographics or carousel posts—could enhance clarity and retention. Ensuring accessibility by consolidating critical information within pinned posts or Instagram Highlights would provide a centralized reference point, reducing information gaps and improving the overall audience experience.

Engagement through promotional language was a notable strength, as @debrads.id successfully employed an emotional and engaging tone to connect with followers. To further enhance this aspect, incorporating storytelling techniques—such as participant success narratives or community impact stories—could deepen audience connection. Additionally, employing action-driven phrases like “Register now before slots run out!” or “Be part of something extraordinary!” could instill a greater sense of urgency, prompting more immediate responses.

The use of flash sales and limited-time discounts effectively boosted registrations, but additional strategies could further maximize participation. Introducing tiered race benefits, such as exclusive merchandise or VIP amenities for early registrants, could add value and incentivize quicker sign-ups. Implementing referral programs would also encourage word-of-mouth promotion, leveraging participants' networks to expand event reach while fostering a stronger sense of community among runners.

From a public relations perspective, @debrads.id effectively utilized visually engaging content and consistent updates to increase event visibility. However, tracking

promotional effectiveness through advanced analytics tools—such as Google Analytics or Instagram Insights—would provide deeper insights into audience behavior, engagement patterns, and conversion rates. Additionally, post-event surveys should be incorporated to collect participant feedback, enabling data-driven refinements for future campaigns and ensuring sustained alignment with audience expectations.

By refining these promotional tactics, @debrads.id can strengthen its role in public relations and event marketing, driving higher engagement and participation for future races.

CONCLUSION

The success of deBrads in promoting the Victoria Run 2023 on Instagram highlights the platform's vital role in modern public relations strategies, particularly for sports events. Leveraging Instagram's broad reach, precise audience targeting, and interactive features, deBrads effectively increased brand awareness, engaged participants and strengthened relationships with sponsors. Their approach underscores the importance of experience-driven strategies, continuous improvement, and adaptability in overcoming promotional challenges.

To optimize Instagram's potential further, deBrads should maintain consistent and engaging content, use interactive features to foster audience participation and explore influencer partnerships to expand reach and credibility. Encouraging user-generated content and utilizing strategic hashtags can amplify visibility while investing in Instagram ads and post-event engagement ensures sustained interest and anticipation for future events.

By refining their promotional strategies and leveraging Instagram analytics for performance monitoring, deBrads can continue setting a benchmark for effective digital public relations in event management. These insights offer practical implications for practitioners aiming to maximize social media's impact on event promotion and contribute to the evolving discourse on digital public relations in the academic field.

BIODATA

Tunggul Siahaan, M.A., is a lecturer at the LSPR Institute of Communication and Business, specializing in Business and entrepreneurship, Public Relations, and Corporate Communication. His work integrates research and community service, emphasizing practical applications that benefit society and enrich student learning.

Deddy Muharman, Ph.D., specializes in communication technology with a Ph.D. in Digital Communication and Media/Multimedia from Universiti Sains Malaysia (2022). A lecturer at LSPR since 2013 and currently Director of the Undergraduate Thesis Program, his research explores digital communication's role in corporate image, persuasion, and Generation Z behavior, with notable publications on social media strategies and persuasive communication.

REFERENCES

- Adriani, V., Chrisdina, & Irwandy, D. (2024). Interpersonal Communication Using Personal Sport Device in Forming Community. *Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 3(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105003120241>
- Agarwal, V., & Puppala, V. N. (2024). Navigating the social media maze: assessing the evolving relevance of public relations in a digital landscape. *Public Administration and Law Review*, 2(18), 34–41. <https://doi.org/10.36690/2674-5216-2024-2-34-41>
- Anani, Z. (2024, December 9). *The true size of the global sports industry*. Global Institute of Sport - Master the global sports industry. <https://gis.sport/news/the-true-size-of-the-global-sports-industry/>
- Ballabh, S. (2023). Social Media Marketing: Strategies and Impact on Business. *Gyan Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.48165/gmj.2023.18.1.1>
- Chen, D. (2022). What is the effect of social media marketing in sports on brand awareness among sports fans? <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/78g3d>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Djuwarsono, S. (2021). *Event management: A practical guide*. Yogyakarta: Student Library.
- Goldblatt, J. (2013). *Special events: Creating and sustaining a new world of celebration*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Jain, K. (2024). Social Media Marketing Vs. Traditional Marketing: Evaluating the Success Rate. *International Journal for Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2024.62335>
- Kostinek, J. (2022). *What is the Effect of Social Media Marketing in Sports on Brand Awareness Among Sports Fans?* <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/78g3d>
- Li, Y. (2023). Research on the Existing Problems and Optimization Strategies of Social Media Marketing of Sports Clubs. *BCP Business & Management*, 39, 227–234. <https://doi.org/10.54691/bcpbm.v39i.4068>
- Machado, J. C., Martins, C. C., & Ferreira, F. C. (2020). Motives to engage with sports brands on Facebook and Instagram—The case of a Portuguese football club. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 21(3), 431–449. Retrieved from <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJMSMS-06-2019-0066/full/html>
- McCarthy, J., Rowley, J., & Keegan, B. J. (2022). Social media marketing strategy in English football clubs. *Soccer & Society*, 23(4–5), 513–528. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2022.2059872>
- Nikitin, V. N. (2023). Definition of key metrics in digital marketing to measure the effectiveness of advertising campaigns. *Экономика и Предпринимательство*, 5(154), 840–845. <https://doi.org/10.34925/eip.2023.154.5.164>
- Osborne, N., & Grant-Smith, D. (2021). *In-Depth Interviewing* (pp. 105–125). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-1677-8_7

- Pankow, K., Vella, S., & Holt, N. (2023). Sport Participation. In *Reference Collection in Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Psychology* (1st ed., pp. 1-10).
- Prayogo, A. D., Anshori, M. I., & Adriani, N. (2023). Utilization of Social Media as a Promotional Strategy to Increase Sales. *Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Kesatuan (JIMKES)*, 11(3), 1367-1374. <https://jurnal.ibik.ac.id/index.php/jimkes/article/download/2281/1516/8160>
- Romney, M., & Johnson, R. G. (2020). Show me a story: Narrative, image, and audience engagement on sports network Instagram accounts. *Information, Communication & Society*, 23(9), 1305-1320. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1486868>
- Sedky, D., Kortam, W., & AbouAish, E. (2020). The role of sports marketing in attracting audiences towards less popular sports. *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences*, 4(2), 113-131. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jhass-04-2020-0059>
- Silverman, D. (2020). *Qualitative Research*. SAGE Publications.
- Smith, M. H. (2016). The role of Instagram in the professional athlete branding process. *Internet Research*, 26(1), 35-55. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-03-2016-0080>
- Soleha, S., Utomo, A. G., & Herari, N. (2023). Identifying key service and quality dimensions as public relations strategy in RSUP Persahabatan. *Jurnal Ilmiah LISKI (Lingkar Studi Komunikasi)*, 9(2), 64. <https://doi.org/10.25124/liski.v9i2.6098>.
- Tyas, A. ., & Hutagaol, O. (2024). The Effect of Social Media Content on Buying Decision of HijUp.com. *Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 1(1), 32-40. Retrieved from <https://journal.lspr.edu/index.php/jcpr/article/view/362>
- Wang, Y. (2021). Building relationships with fans: How sports organizations used Twitter as a communication tool. *Sport in Society*, 24(3), 472-489. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17430437.2020.1725475>
- Watkins, B., & Smith, S. A. (2022). I want to work there: How public relations agencies communicate organizational culture and identity on Instagram. *Journal of Communication Management*, 26(2), 133-148. Retrieved from <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JCOM-01-2021-0005/full/html>
- Williams, R., & Chinn, M. (2015). Social media marketing in sports: A relationship marketing perspective. *Journal of Sport Management*, 29(2), 184-202. <https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2013-0294>
- Wolverton, M. (2023). Effective Use of Social Media in a Digitalizing Landscape. *The Journal of Innovations*. <https://doi.org/10.62470/2c242964>
- World Sailing. (2024). *Race Management Manual: January 2024*. https://d7qh6ksdplczd.cloudfront.net/sailing/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/26121014/RM-Manual-January-2024_Re-issue-01st-July-2024-with-Bookmarks.pdf

Yan, Z., & Huan, W. (2024). The role of social media in sports tourism marketing: A review and future outlook. *Frontiers in Sport Research*, 6(4), 132-137. <https://doi.org/10.25236/fsr.2024.060420>

An Assessment of Social Media Opportunities in Public Relations Practice at University K and St Paul Universities in Kenya

Nyabera N Samwel¹, James Marwa Mwita²

¹Tharaka University, Kenya

²Rongo University, Kenya

Submitted: September 2024, **Revised:** November 2024, **Accepted:** December 2024

ABSTRACT

To ensure adequate public relations in the 21st Century, universities have turned to Social Media in service delivery. Despite the availability and utilization of social media tools, there is still limited understanding of the social media possibilities, especially WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, that private universities in Kenya have not fully harnessed for public relations. This study evaluates the public relations social media opportunities that University K and St. Paul Universities in Kenya have not yet taken advantage of. This research took place from May to July 2022. A mixed methods approach was employed, incorporating a questionnaire and interviews. It involved 270 questionnaire respondents and two in-depth interviews with PR officers from the two selected universities. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v. 23, while qualitative data were analyzed using narrative analysis. The results indicated that social media positively affected service delivery within the Public Relations departments. It was also disclosed that social media aided in promoting their accomplishments, improved information quality, established a user-friendly platform for the public to interact with their organization, increased access to information, and strengthened the organization's lobbying capacity for public backing of their stances. The research suggests that universities should take advantage of the ample opportunities social media offers to engage with their audiences and assist organizations in expanding their reach for public relations efforts.

Keywords: *social media integration, digital communication strategies, organizational engagement, optimizing social media, higher education.*

INTRODUCTION

Social media includes online abilities, activities, or communities individuals utilize to create concepts and exchange opinions, insights, expertise, and perspectives with everyone (Rijal, et al., 2024). The tools include social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook and micro-blogging platforms like Twitter (Koç & Akbiyik, 2020). Social media provides a means for communication to flow between the public and the organization, resulting in two-way communication.

Public relations practice serves as a crucial link between organizations and the public. Public Relations professionals are given a unique opportunity to collect

information, assess public opinion on various matters, and engage their audiences in direct conversations about different topics through the Internet (Al Haded, et al., 2024). The expansion of the internet in the 21st century continues to be a significant advancement in media. For the organization to thrive, it is crucial to consider the viewpoints of essential stakeholders, such as investors, customers, stakeholders, employees, and other publics within the organization's network.

Experts and researchers in communication have highlighted the importance of creating and executing social media strategies (Jeswani, 2023). As a result, enhancing and comprehending virtual communication through social media channels in PR remains indispensable in the current landscape (Alper, 2024). Shi (2022) highlighted the significance and worth of two-way communication in developing reciprocal understanding between the public and organizations, both externally and internally.

Consequently, given this context, numerous higher education institutions, including private universities, have utilized social media for their communications; however, the potential of social media in connection to Public Relations Practice has not been sufficiently and empirically explored in Kenya (Kwamboka, 2024).

Contemporary Public Relations Professionals are tasked with creating strategies and executing the methods on numerous platforms to meet the requirements of their audiences. As technology and globalization advance, the functions of Public Relations Professionals and the significance of social media also change.

The utilization of social media is continuously increasing among both organizations and the public. Moreover, 79% of business and management entities employ social media (Nayak, et al., 2020). Additionally, a recognized accomplishment of social media utilization in investor relations (Hannoka, 2023). Furthermore, it enhances the public relations objectives of government agencies through social media, particularly Facebook.

Previous research in Kenya has confirmed that social media can induce transformations in public administration, improve information dissemination, and improve service provision. Specifically, Dodds et al. (2023) recognized the internet's influence in altering the power dynamics between an organization and its audiences, thereby ensuring a balanced two-way communication of information.

Although organizations have access to social media platforms, there is limited understanding of the opportunities these platforms present for Public Relations. However, even within the realm of higher education institutions (from initial research), various businesses in Kenya have accounts of differing usage of social media in Public Relations. These setups called for a study to reveal the general possibilities social media can provide to private universities regarding public relations.

To comprehend the problem described above, the researchers aimed to address one research question: What social media opportunities about WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter use do Kenyan private universities have yet to exploit in terms of public relations practice?

This research focused specifically on evaluating the possibilities of utilizing social media in Public Relations. In comparison to the limitations, the study was clearly constrained in relation to the content since it only concentrated on three social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter). It is reasonable to expect that in organizations, especially in higher education institutions, there are likely similarities between traditional and modern media forms of communication. Therefore, it would be more rewarding to address both forms of media.

Additionally, this paper focused solely on two private universities (University K and St Paul University). It might have been more informative to gain insight into the social media opportunities presented by social media in other higher education institutions. Additionally, the research was confined to the Nairobi metropolitan area regarding context. Once more, it could have been beneficial to include additional private universities within the nation. Therefore, it is essential to clarify that the constraints outlined in this study were inevitable in academic research, which is inherently restricted by time and resources. This arrangement required a restricted approach, context, and scope of content. Nonetheless, the thoroughness in reaching the chosen scope was sufficiently extensive to guarantee that the study results were academically viable.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The current literature, nonetheless, has primarily been written from the Western viewpoint with limited journal articles focused on clear-cut areas of the world as well as the Central European backgrounds (Ingenhoff & Koelling, 2009) disregarding Public Relations practice in higher learning institutions in Kenya. This paper thus, endeavors to fill the gap in the existing literature and gaze at inclinations precise to Kenya.

Social media is not an entirely new phenomenon in Kenya; it has enhanced communication within organizations since its emergence. The advancement of social media has reached its peak in introducing policies and regulations linked to everyday communication and public relations. However, there is limited knowledge regarding the potential of social media related to WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter, which Kenyan private universities have not yet leveraged for public relations.

The objective is to utilize social media prospects in public relations inside organizations. Public relations professionals have been forced to use these platforms to connect with their audiences. Social media have, therefore, found their way not only into public universities but also into private universities in Kenya. This move was critical, especially after Kenyan professionals and scholars in communication studies emphasized the need to develop and implement social media strategies.

A study by Wright and Hinson (2009) examined social media applications by 574 PR US professionals. The survey findings indicated that public relations professionals considered search engine promotion the most significant, followed by blogs, social networking sites, video-sharing platforms, and message boards. The least regarded were social bookmarking and photo sharing. Moreover, another study conducted in the

United States showed that Public Relations professionals believe there is an impact when social media collaborates with traditional media in any capacity or otherwise. Social media is deemed a trustworthy way of sharing and transmitting information via conventional means (Altay, et al., 2024).

Lucas (2024) conducted a study on using new media in public relations. The findings from their research showed that public relations experts are progressively adopting social media in their roles. These new media tools generate unique prospects for PR professionals and strategic audiences. The results indicated that public relations professionals believed that social and various new media continually improved their accuracy, credibility, honesty, trustworthiness, and truthfulness. They consider these new media as effective watchdogs for traditional news outlets, influencing corporate and organizational transparency while promoting a culture of transparency and ethics.

Further, Scoble and Israel (2006) assert that there exist opportunities for organizations to seem extra human in online communication engagements through means similar to blogs. This is in line with the opinions of Andria, et al (2024) that interactions comprise communication discussion, and users gain increased control over the interactive communication process. Research reveals that a noteworthy percentage of Public Relations experts are persuaded that the content of the mainstream media is affected by blogs besides social media, as shown by Wright and Hinson (2008). This indicates that while the industry acknowledges social media's advantages, traditional media remains reliable and essential.

Agarwal & Puppala (2024) studied "PR practitioners' use of social media tools and communication technology." The findings showed that professionals have utilized almost six various social media platforms in their work. Furthermore, Contri, et al., (2023) studied Italian municipalities' targeting "Using Social media to engage citizens and specifically to examine how social media contributes to public engagement. The results concluded that municipalities used Facebook and Twitter to engage citizens; besides, there was a need for public administrations to move from a general isomorphic social media adoption to a thoughtful media strategy" (Guillarme, et al., 2024; Zaiats, 2024; Sarjito, 2023). Additionally, the emergence of new media has resulted in the expansion of PR practices (Abdullah, et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Samwel & Lando (2022) research on the effect of social media on PR in Kenya found that even with contests, for instance, internet inaccessibility, skills, and reliability, social media was being consumed. Up until then, the extant literature with regards to social media potential basically slopes in the direction of positive upshots over heightened communication among organizations' key public and organization. Incidentally, the literature demonstrates that social media is able to stimulate two-way communication among the public as well as their organizations.

Preceding research has demonstrated the potential of social media in bringing transformations or alterations in public management and the flow of information besides boosting service delivery. Specifically, El-Kasim (2020) admitted that there had been a power balance between the public and an organization because of social media,

to the magnitude of guaranteeing a two-way symmetrical information exchange between the organization and its public. Thus, Social media has enhanced and provided a leeway for unanticipated opportunities to involve the community in government responsibilities (He, et al., 2024).

Aydoğan (2021) conducted a study in Turkey titled "Dialogic Communication During Covid-19 Pandemic: An Analysis on Technoparks' Social Media Usage in Turkey." The research aimed to explore how technoparks utilized social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) during the first three months of the Covid-19 pandemic to facilitate dialogic communication with stakeholders. The study employed content analysis of social media profiles maintained by 70 active technoparks, evaluating their engagement based on dialogic communication principles. Findings revealed that while technoparks extensively used social media for information dissemination, they largely failed to leverage dialogic features effectively, maintaining a predominantly monologic approach. This suggests that rather than fostering two-way engagement, social media management in Turkish technoparks remained focused on broadcasting information rather than encouraging interaction and dialogue (Aydoğan, 2021).

In addition, Wilson and Supa (2013) explored the effect of Twitter on the public relations-journalist. The study adopted a questionnaire covering 340 journalists and 291 public relations practitioners. The results indicated that the benefits of Twitter as an information-sharing platform were recognized as necessary for journalism and public relations.

In another study, You and Kim (2013) examined the use of online newsrooms on U.S. state tourism websites. The study adopted a content analysis of 50 state tourism websites to investigate the availability of online newsrooms and their contents and overall usability. The results indicated that "the average number of social media use by the 50 state tourism offices is 4.04, and the most often used social media are Facebook (50 States), Twitter (49 States), YouTube (36 States), and Flickr (29 States)" (You and Kim, 2013).

To the continuing debate, social media use is on the upsurge amongst organizations in Kenya, instigating the need to embrace social media to improve Public Relations in public administration. Arief et al., (2022) points out that for social media to be successful in government, it ought to advance the department objectives, mission, social technology intentions, and department goals, in addition to the activities outlined.

As more forms of social media emerge, organizations adopt new communication techniques with their employees, the public, competitors, suppliers, investors, and stakeholders. Social media has been adopted from its inception by public relations; PR practitioners perceive social media positively with respect to strategic communication. However, the social media opportunities for WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter that Kenyan private universities have yet to exploit in public relations remain scanty, thus necessitating this study.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Mixed research enhances explanatory depth by combining numerical data with contextual insights, offering a multidimensional perspective on the phenomenon under study (Nuzirwan & Sukandar, 2024). The approach facilitates triangulation, which strengthens the validity of findings by merging distinct viewpoints (Adu et al., 2022). Quantitative data were obtained from students, while qualitative data were gathered from senior management overseeing public relations and communication.

The research was conducted at two private universities in Kenya—St. Paul University and University K—both located in Nairobi CBD. These institutions were purposefully selected due to their established public relations and communication departments, making them representative of higher education institutions in the region. According to Willie (2023), a target population refers to the total number of individuals, elements, or groups relevant to a study. Accordingly, this study targeted 270 students (drawn from a total of 1,500 students at University K and 1,200 students at St. Paul University) and two senior managers responsible for communication and public relations at these institutions.

The study utilized a combination of purposive and stratified sampling to ensure both representation and relevance. Stratified sampling was employed for student respondents, ensuring equal participation across faculties and academic years, thus enhancing inclusivity. Meanwhile, purposive sampling was used to select senior public relations managers as key informants due to their subject-matter expertise (Ahmad et al., 2023). A well-structured sampling frame enabled random selection, strengthening sample representativeness and improving research reliability (Siegel & Wagner, 2022). Furthermore, a structured sampling framework reduced sampling errors, minimizing selection biases and enhancing data accuracy (Bruce et al., 2024).

To determine the appropriate student sample size, a 10% proportional selection method was applied, yielding a final sample of 270 students from both institutions. This approach balanced generality with depth, ensuring that the study captured both broad patterns and nuanced insights.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. In-depth interviews were used to gather qualitative data from purposively selected senior managers in charge of public relations and communication. This method was particularly useful in eliciting deep insights, attitudes, and perspectives on public relations practices (Thomas & Earthy, 2023). Interviews allowed respondents to share nuanced opinions on how social media influences university public relations strategies (Assegaff et al., 2024).

On the other hand, structured questionnaires were administered to student respondents. As key users and recipients of social media-based public relations strategies, students provided diverse perspectives on its effectiveness. The

questionnaire method was chosen for its efficiency, reliability, and validity in obtaining standardized responses aligned with the study's objectives.

Data analysis followed a systematic and descriptive approach, leveraging both statistical and narrative methods. Quantitative data were processed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Findings were presented through tables and bar graphs to illustrate social media's role in public relations strategies. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed using narrative analysis, drawing insights from empirical literature to contextualize findings. This analytical approach ensured that interpretations were directly aligned with research objectives.

Ethical approval was obtained from relevant institutional authorities prior to data collection. Informed consent was secured from all participants to ensure voluntary participation while safeguarding their rights (Isaselo & Tarimo, 2024; Kim, 2024). Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the research process, with personal identifiers excluded to protect respondent privacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first objective that guided the research was to assess social media opportunities about WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter that Kenyan private universities have yet to exploit in public relations.

Table 1 Response Rate for the Two Institutions

Institution	Responses		
	Actual responses	Non-responses	Total
St. Paul	119 (44.1%)	1 (0.4%)	120 (44.4%)
University K	150 (55.6%)	0 (0.0%)	150 (55.6%)
Total	269 (99.6%)	1 (0.4%)	270 (100.0%)

For this study, the researcher administered 270 questionnaires to the respondents from two Universities: University K (150) and St Paul University (120). The table above shows the distribution of respondents.

Social media opportunities by Select Kenyan Private Universities in terms of public relations

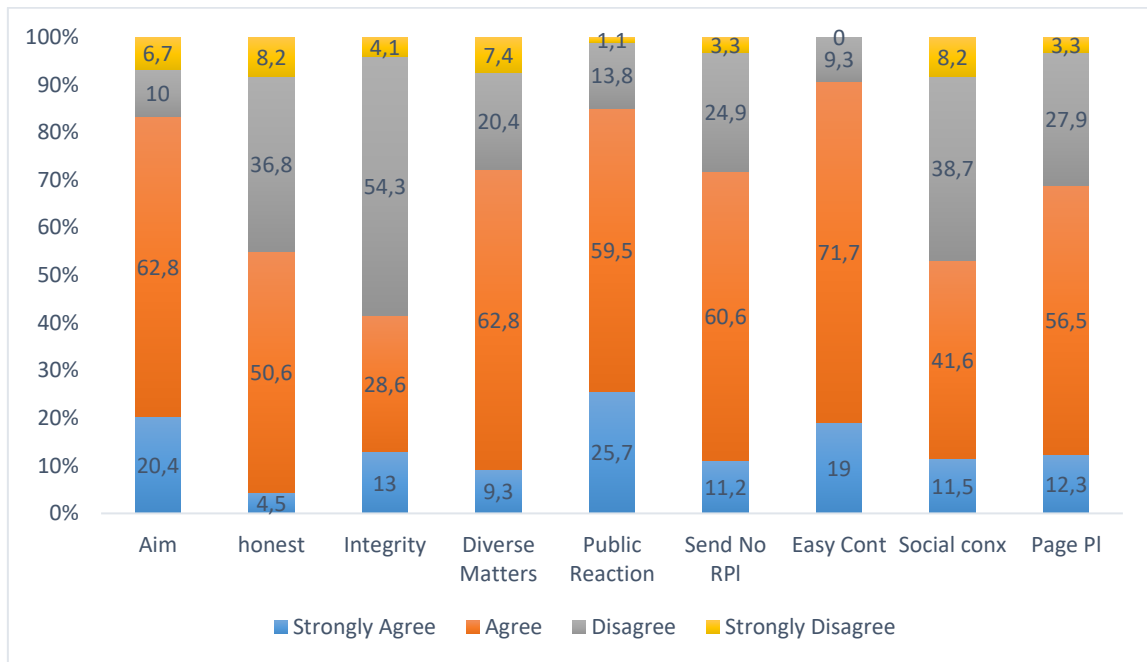


Figure 1 Agreement on Facebook Use.

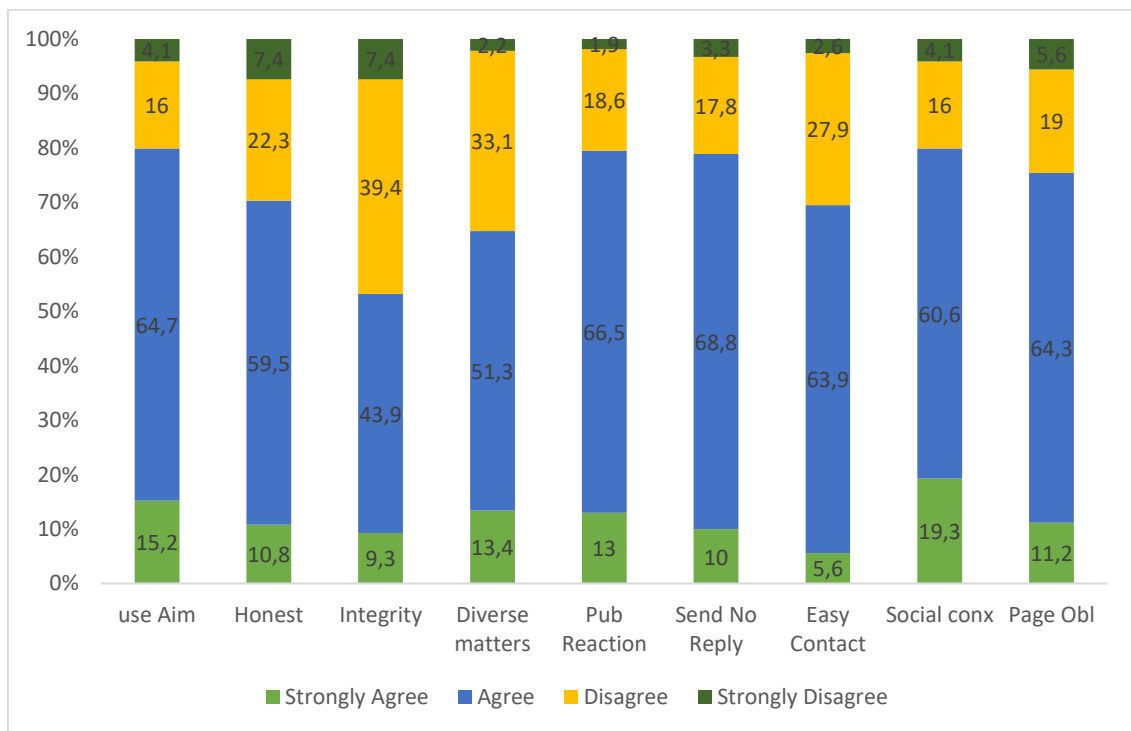


Figure 2 Agreement on Whatsapp Use

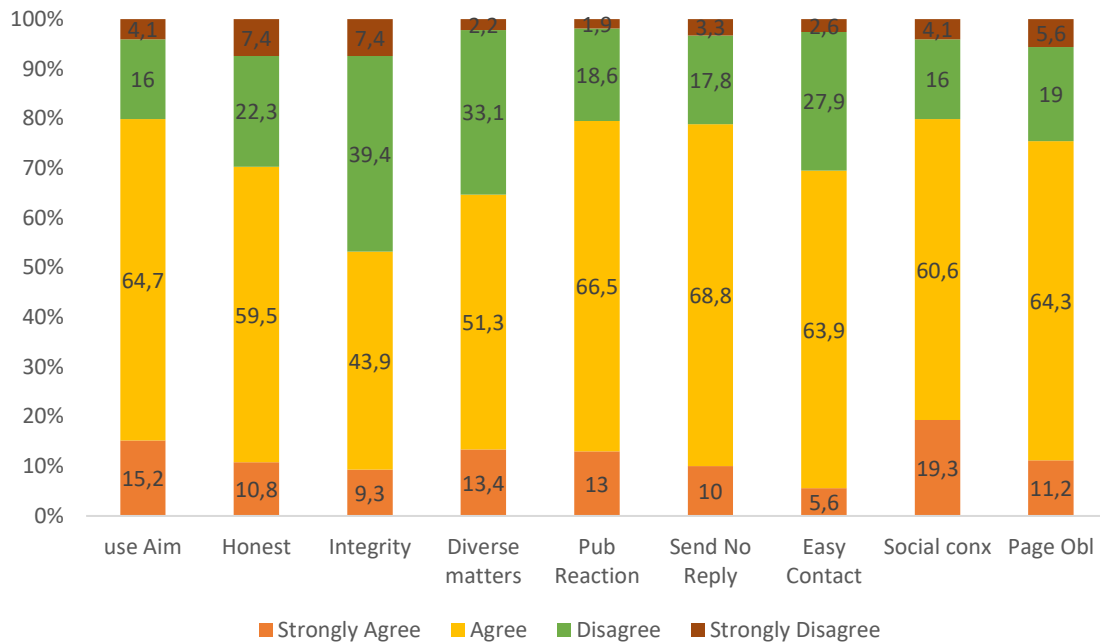


Figure 3 Agreement on Twitter Use.

In this study, social media opportunities that St. Paul Universities and University K have yet to exploit in terms of public relations practice were advanced from the viewpoint of benefits that can be gained by organizations exploiting social media. Data for this research question was sought (through social media, virtual social connections have been developed). Overall, based on the findings presented in the above-mentioned section, From figures (4.7, 4.8, and 4.9), we established that the questionnaires sent via Twitter and WhatsApp appealed to the majority of respondents (79.9%) besides Facebook appealing to (53.1%) respondents. Hence, an indication that the respondents tended to use WhatsApp and Twitter coherently in assisting the public in developing virtual social connections with the organizations.

As identified during data analysis, this issue on social media opportunities attracted much focus from the PR practitioners’ perspective in qualitative data. The results demonstrated that a majority of the respondents felt that through social media, there is a development of virtual connection between the organization and its public, which the researcher deemed an ideal opportunity for social media. This agrees with Trammell's (2006) findings that social media is valued since it offers an additional way to contact the public. Additionally, Kent and Taylor (1998) acknowledged the prospective of establishing connections via the net, describing it as the "dialogic communication medium" (p.331). Thus, this boils down to an insinuation that an organization defines the extent to which it exploits social media opportunities irrespective of the platform used in engaging its public.

From an in-depth interview with the senior management in charge of communication and PR from the two institutions, the study reveals that the public

relations practitioners from both institutions valued the improved popularity and the institution's reach. Bearing that St Paul University's and University K's social media platforms appealed to most respondents, as those were the only online means of reaching their organizations, it is apparent that both institutions relished greater prominence after social media use. Both institutions may be required to evaluate the potential opportunities and means of engaging via social media. The two interviewees specified that social media use had the possible advantage of enhancing public relations practice. This tendency seems to repeat as a leeway that the two interviewees from University K and St. Paul University used social media in their daily activities with the public. St. Paul University describes such a replication as follows:

"Social Media has a positive influence on the PR practice of public relations. They have the potential benefit of enhancing PR practice, where the number of the public depends on the information communicated regarding the organization. "

Furthermore, based on in-depth interviews with the senior management responsible for communication and PR at the two organizations, the research indicates that utilizing social media in their communication is especially effective for engaging their audiences on diverse matters. This aligns with the findings of Sweetser and Metzgar (2007) and Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005), who noted that various organizations utilize social media to enhance connections with their audiences. Furthermore, it was revealed that University K participates more actively in PR efforts via social media. This was because University K had more human resources associated with digital media operations and media affairs, such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn, with roles related to digital media operations in contrast to St. Paul University.

Another key finding worth discussing further is the issue of public engagement. It emerged that St. Paul University and University K heightened public engagement. Even though such an engagement was not strengthened to the best, the public's needs were often not met nor addressed fully. Further, the interviewees highlighted the following as critical in enhancing PR practice: seminar attendance, organizing workshops, conference attendance and participation, having meetings now and again, campaigns to educate the public, partnering with other PROs from different organizations, and improving content in PR. The research agrees with Grunig (2009) that if public relations officers exploited social media to its broad potential, it could offer them an additional collaborative, wide-reaching, strategic, as well as socially responsible two-way method of communication.

CONCLUSION

This paper has assessed social media opportunities in Public Relations Practice in Kenya. The study reveals that social media provides Public Relations with a platform for

communication, such as online meetings, sharing of ideas, research, connections, training on varied issues, dialogue, and improving feedback between the organization and the public.

Concerning the potential of social media in public relations practice in Kenya, the two universities should take advantage of social media's numerous opportunities to maintain regular communication with the public. Moreover, they ought to utilize social media to promote their courses to their audiences and build a robust network for potential connections to gain significant recognition and foster a positive relationship with the public. Therefore, fully utilizing social media tools will assist organizations in expanding their reach for Public Relations efforts.

Drawing from the results of this study, we recommend that additional research be carried out from an external viewpoint on social media preferences, the cost of social media, response rates on social media, and the use of social media in public universities.

BIODATA

Dr. Nyabera N. Samwel is a distinguished scholar in Communication and Media Studies. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication and Public Relations from Moi University, a Master of Science degree in Communication Studies from Rongo University, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Mass Communication from St Augustine University of Tanzania. Dr. Nyabera currently serves as a lecturer at Tharaka University. His areas of expertise and research include Digital Media, Public Relations, and Corporate Social Responsibility.

James Marwa Mwita, Ph.D is a communication and media scholar with a varied academic background and experience in education, languages, media, and communication. He earned a Bachelor of Education (Kiswahili and English) from the University of Nairobi, a Master's in International Communication from the Communication University of China, and a PhD in Mass Communication from St Augustine University of Tanzania, focusing on Media Literacy and Civic Engagement. James is currently a lecturer at Rongo University, Kenya.

REFERENCES

- Al Hadeed, A. Y., Maysari, I., Aldroubi, M. M., Attar, R. W., Al Olaimat, F., & Habes, M. (2024). Role of Public Relations Practices in Content Management: The Mediating Role of New Media Platforms. *Frontiers in Sociology*, 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2023.1273371>
- Abdullah, A. Z., Nurmiarani, M., & Sadjijo, P. (2024). Transformasi Media Sosial dalam Praktik Public Relations. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Ilmu Sosial*, 2(4), 251–260. <https://doi.org/10.54066/jupendis.v2i4.2268>
- Adu, J., Owusu, M. F., Martin-Yeboah, E., Pino Gavidia, L. A., & Gyamfi, S. (2022). A Discussion of Some Controversies in Mixed Methods Research for Emerging Researchers. *Methodological Innovations*, 15(3), 321-330. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20597991221123398>
- Agarwal, V., & Puppala, V. N. (2024). Navigating the Social Media Maze: Assessing the Evolving Relevance of Public Relations in A Digital Landscape. *Public Administration and Law Review*, 2(18), 34–41. <https://doi.org/10.36690/2674-5216-2024-2-34-41>
- Ahmad, N., Alias, F. A., & Abdul Razak, N. A. (2023). Understanding Population and Sample in Research: Key Concepts for Valid Conclusions. *SIG e-Learning@CS*, 19-24. https://appspenang.uitm.edu.my/sigcs/2023-2/Articles/20234_UnderstandingPopulationAndSampleInResearch.pdf
- Alper, D. Ö. (2024). Public Relations Discourse on X (Twitter) and Analysis of Public Relations. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 3(1), 14-26. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105003120242>
- Altay, S., Hoes, E., & Wojcieszak, M. (2024). News on Social Media Boosts Knowledge, Belief Accuracy, and Trust: A Field Experiment on Instagram and WhatsApp. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/hq5ru>
- Andria, H., Shalma, A., & Usman, O. (2024). Analysis of the Influence of Interactive Communication, Consumer Preferences, and Promotional Effectiveness on Purchasing Decisions on the Shopee Live Streaming Features. *International Student Conference on Business, Education, Economics, Accounting, and Management (ISC-BEAM)*, 1(1), 235-247. <https://doi.org/10.21009/isc-beam.011.16>
- Arief, A., Suyuti, S., & Khairan, A. (2022). A Review of Social Media Roles in E-Government. *MATEC Web of Conferences*, 372, 04001. <https://doi.org/10.1051/matecconf/202237204001>
- Assegaff, S. B., Fajarini, E. S., Herari, N., & Setiawati, A. (2024). Message Reception Analysis in Intercultural Communication during "Magnetic Resonance Imaging" Training in Hospitals. *Jurnal Komunikasi Ikatan Sarjana Komunikasi Indonesia*, 9(1), 211-225. <https://doi.org/10.25008/jkiski.v9i1.1010>
- Aydoğan, H. (2021). Dialogic Communication during COVID-19 Pandemic: An Analysis on Technoparks' Social Media Usage in Turkey. *Connectist: Istanbul University*

- Journal of Communication Sciences*, 0(60), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.26650/connectist2021-000126>
- Bell, E., Bryman, A., & Harley, B. (2022). Mixed methods research: Combining quantitative and qualitative research. *Business Research Methods*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hebz/9780198869443.003.0040>
- Bruce, P.C., Gedeck, P. and Dobbins, J. (2024). Surveys and Sampling. In *Statistics for Data Science and Analytics* (eds P.C. Bruce, P. Gedeck and J. Dobbins). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781394253838.ch7>
- Bryman, A. (2008). Why do researchers integrate quantitative and qualitative research? In M. Bergman (Ed.), *Advances in mixed methods research*, 21(8), 87-100.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*, 4th Ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Contri, M., Fissi, S., & Gori, E. (2023). *Citizen engagement and dialogic accounting through social media: a study of Italian regions*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/aaaj-02-2022-5663>
- Dodds, T., de Vreese, C., Helberger, N., Resendez, V., & Seipp, T. (2023). Popularity-driven Metrics: Audience Analytics and Shifting Opinion Power to Digital Platforms. *Journalism Studies*, 24(3), 403–421. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2023.2167104>
- El-Kasim, M. (2020). Nigerian Public Relations Practitioners' Use of Social Media: Validation of an Online Interactivity Model Applying Structural Equation Modeling. *Media Watch*, 11(2). <https://doi.org/10.15655/MW/2020/V11I2/195653>
- Grunig, J.E. (2009). Paradigms of global Public Relations in an age of digitalisation. [Online]. *PRism*, 6(2). Available at: http://praxis.massev.ac.nz/prism_on-line_iourn.html [accessed 15 April 2013].
- Guillaumie, L., Vézina-Im, L., Bourque, L., Boiral, O., Talbot, D., & Harb, E. (2024). Best Practices for Municipalities to Promote Online Citizen Participation and Engagement on Facebook: A Narrative Review of the Literature. *Advances in the Social Sciences*, 13(3), 127. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci13030127>
- Hands, A. S. (2022). Integrating quantitative and qualitative data in mixed methods research: An illustration. *The Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science*, 45(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.5206/cjilsrscib.v45i1.10645>
- Hannoka, A. (2023). *Social Media as A Tool in Investor Relations* [Doctoral dissertation]. <https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/88057/1/URN%3ANBN%3Afi%3Aju-202306264112.pdf>
- He, J., Lin, Y., Hooimeijer, P., & Monstadt, J. (2024). Measuring social network influence on power relations in collaborative planning: A case study of Beijing City, China. *Cities*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2024.104866>
- Ingenhoff, D., & Koelling, A. M. (2009). The potential of websites as a relationship-building tool for charitable fundraising NPOs. *Public Relations Review*, 35(1), 66-73. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2008.09.023>.

- Iseselo, M. K., & Tarimo, E. A. M. (2024). Comprehension of informed consent and voluntary participation in registration cohorts for phase IIb HIV vaccine trial in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania: a qualitative descriptive study. *BMC Medical Ethics*, 25. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12910-024-01033-z>
- Jeswani, R. (2023). The role and importance of social media marketing in brand building. *Irish Interdisciplinary Journal of Science & Research*, 07(04), 01-09. <https://doi.org/10.46759/ijjsr.2023.7401>
- Kim, M. J. (2024). Enhancing Professional Awareness of Informed Consent: Safeguarding the Rights of Patients and Practitioners. *Journal of Korean Neurosurgical Society*. <https://doi.org/10.3340/jkns.2024.0121>
- Kwamboka, J. (2024). Role of Social Media in Stakeholder Engagement in Universities in Kenya. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research-MIYR*. <https://doi.org/10.61108/ijsshr.v2i1.86>
- Koç, T., & Akbiyik, A. (2020). Social Network Sites (SNS) and Their Irrepressible Popularity: Can They Really Cause an Addiction? In *Managing Social Media Practices in the Digital Economy* (pp. 234-263). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338314665_Social_Network_Sites_SNS_and_Their_Irrepressible_Popularity_Can_They_Really_Cause_an_Addiction
- Lucas, B. D. (2024). Adoption and use of Social Media for Engagement by Public Relations Professionals in Broadcasting Organisations in Plateau State, Nigeria. *London Journal of Research in Humanities & Social Science*, 24(13), 51-68. https://journalspress.com/LJRHSS_Volume24/Adoption-and-use-of-Social-Media-for-Engagement-by-Public-Relations-Professionals-in-Broadcasting-Organisations-in-Plateau-State-Nigeria.pdf
- Nayak, B. C., Nayak, G. K., & Jena, D. (2020). Social recognition and employee engagement: The effect of social media in organizations. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management*, 12, 184797902097510. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1847979020975109>
- Nuzirwan, I. ., & Sukandar, R. (2024). The Impact of Hoaxes to the Business of Information Technology Companies in Indonesia. *Journal of Communication and Public Relations*, 1(1), 41–50. Retrieved from <https://journal.lspr.edu/index.php/jcpr/article/view/363>
- Rijal, S., Almaududi Ausat, A. M., & Siminto. (2024). The role of social media in enhancing social awareness and community participation in education. *Indo-MathEdu Intellectuals Journal*, 5(2), 2385-2398. <https://doi.org/10.54373/imeij.v5i2.1067>
- Samwel, N. N., & Lando, A. L. (2022). Impact of Social media Use on Public relations Practice in Select Private Universities in Kenya. *East African Journal of Information Technology*, 5(1), 180–193. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajit.5.1.949>
- Sarjito, A. (2023). The Influence of Social Media on Public Administration. *Jurnal Terapan Pemerintahan Minangkabau*. <https://doi.org/10.33701/jtpm.v3i2.3378>

- Scoble, R., & Israel, S. (2006). *Naked Conversations: How blogs are changing the way businesses talk with customers*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Shi, H. (2022). *Communication with Internal and External Stakeholders* (pp. 81–91). Routledge eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003147480-7>
- Siegel, A. F., & Wagner, M. R. (2022). Chapter 8 - Random Sampling: Planning Ahead for Data Gathering. In *Practical Business Statistics (Eighth Edition)* (1st ed., pp. 205-235). Academic Press.
- Sweetser, K. D., & Metzgar, E. (2007). Communicating during crisis: Use of blogs as a relationship management tool. *Public Relations Review*, 33(3), 340–342.
- Trammell, K. D., & Keshelashvili, A. (2005). Examining the new influencers: A self-presentation study of A-list blogs. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 82(4), 968-982. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900508200413>
- Willie, M. M. (2023). Distinguishing between population and target population: A mini review. *Surgery Research Journal*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.33425/2768-0428.1027>
- Wright, D. K., & Hinson, M. D. (2008). How Blogs and Social Media are Changing Public Relations and the Way it is Practiced. *Public Relations Journal*, 2(2). <http://www.muhammadsaleem.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/02/wrighthinson.pdf>
- Zaiats, O. (2024). The role of social media in public administration and management: interaction channels and their effectiveness. *Ekonomični Gorizonti*, 2-3(28), 169–178. [https://doi.org/10.31499/2616-5236.3\(28\).2024.308214](https://doi.org/10.31499/2616-5236.3(28).2024.308214)
-

Assessment of the Adherence to Public Relations Code of Ethics by Practitioners in Lagos State

Chuddy Christian Oduenyi¹, Etumnu Emeka Williams²

¹School of Media and Communication, Pan Atlantic University, Lagos

²Department of Mass Communication, Imo State University, Owerri

Submitted: September 2024, **Revised:** November 2024, **Accepted:** December 2024

ABSTRACT

The study investigated practitioners' adherence to Lagos State, Nigeria's public relations code of ethics. The study was anchored on the two-way symmetrical model of PR and absolutist ethical theory. The investigation adopted an in-depth interview research method. The researchers reached out to 10 PR practitioners in Lagos. The researchers utilized the purposive sampling technique, and the interview guide was used as the data collection instrument. It was revealed that PR practitioners are vastly knowledgeable about the existing code of ethics governing PR practices in Lagos state and, by extension, Nigeria. Also, the result indicated that there is a low level of adherence to the code of ethics. It was recommended that strict regulatory principles and actions be enforced on erring PR practitioners in Lagos state to deter others from breaking or twisting the code of ethics of PR practices and serve their agenda.

Keywords: *public relations, ethical practices, PR practitioners, professional ethics, code of conduct.*

INTRODUCTION

Adherence to ethical codes of practice is essential for maintaining the reputation and credibility of PR practitioners and the organizations they represent (Milovan et al, 2023). By upholding ethical standards, PR professionals are committed to honesty, transparency, and fairness in their communication practices (Boyton, 2025). This enhances the credibility of their messages and strengthens their relationships with stakeholders, leading to more effective communication outcomes and better organizational outcomes (Hou & Johnston, 2024).

Public relations practitioners must adhere to ethical principles that guide their interactions with clients, media, and the public (Wachid, et al., 2024). These principles include truthfulness, transparency, professional integrity, professional competence, loyalty and social responsibility (Stanić, 2020). However, there have been instances where practitioners have been found to engage in unethical practices such as misleading information, paid endorsements, and biased media coverage (Igbekele, 2012). For

example, suppose an organization has a reputation damage issue. In that case, a public relations officer must be honest and transparent in handling such an issue.

As a public relations officer, one is expected to exhibit high competence and professionalism as expected by the code of professional ethics, but are they living up to the expectation? This raises questions about how much practitioners adhere to the ethical code of practice in their day-to-day activities.

Research studies have been conducted to assess the ethical behavior of public relations practitioners, with mixed results (Abdullah & Threadgold, 2008). While some studies have found high levels of adherence to ethical standards, others have reported instances of ethical lapses (Bowen & Stacks, 2013). This indicates a need for more comprehensive research to evaluate the ethical practices of practitioners across different sectors and regions (Fullerton & McKinnon, 2015).

In Nigeria, public relations has seen significant growth and development in recent years, with many organizations recognizing the importance of effective communication and reputation management. The Public Relations Consultants Association of Nigeria (PRCAN) is the umbrella body for PR consultancy firms in the country (Idid & Arandas, 2016). It has been instrumental in promoting ethical standards and professional conduct among its members. PRCAN has a code of ethics that outlines the expected behavior and practices of PR practitioners in Nigeria, including guidelines on transparency, honesty, and respect for stakeholders (Nnolim et al., 2014).

With the rise of social media and online news platforms, it has become increasingly difficult to distinguish between accurate information and false narratives (Bilodeau & Khalid, 2024). This poses a significant threat to the reputation of individuals and organizations, making it crucial for professionals to verify and fact-check information before disseminating it to the public (Oladokun, et al., 2024).

Nigeria is a diverse country with over 250 ethnic groups, each with its customs, traditions, and values. Public relations professionals must be mindful of these cultural nuances when developing communication strategies and campaigns to ensure they resonate with the target audience and do not cause offense or misunderstanding (Joseph, 2023).

Ethical considerations also play a vital role in Nigeria's public relations practice. Practitioners are expected to adhere to codes of conduct and ethical guidelines set forth by professional organizations such as the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR). These standards require practitioners to act with honesty, integrity, and accountability in their communication efforts and avoid engaging in deceptive or unethical practices that could harm the reputation of their clients or the profession (Efendi, et al., 2024).

Despite the challenges and ethical considerations in public relations practice in Nigeria, there are also significant opportunities for growth and development in the field. As the country continues to grow and evolve, there is an increasing demand for skilled and experienced public relations professionals to help individuals and organizations navigate the complex media landscape and build positive relationships with their stakeholders (Jackson & Moloney, 2019). With the rise of online platforms and digital

technologies, there is a greater need for professionals adept at leveraging these tools to reach and engage with target audiences meaningfully (Pascucci, et al., 2023). By developing strong digital communication skills and staying abreast of the latest trends and technologies, public relations professionals can position themselves for success in this evolving field (Amin, 2024).

As in any country, public relations professionals in Nigeria are responsible for accurately communicating information to the public and stakeholders (Akintola, et al., 2023). However, issues such as misinformation, biased reporting, and unethical practices can undermine the credibility of organizations and damage their reputation (Shahbazi & Bunker, 2024). Trust is a fundamental component of effective communication, as stakeholders are likelier to engage with organizations they trust and believe to be honest and transparent (Adeyeye et al., 2020). Public relations professionals in Nigeria must understand the cultural, social, and political dynamics of the country to build trust with diverse stakeholders; communication professionals can learn how to navigate complex communication challenges, engage with stakeholders effectively, and build long-term relationships built on trust (Keghku, et al., 2023).

Additionally, Nigeria is a diverse and complex society with multiple ethnic, cultural, and social groups, making effective communication a significant challenge for organizations (Pepper, et al., 2024). Public relations professionals must navigate language barriers, cultural differences, and political sensitivities to communicate effectively with diverse stakeholders (Mandela, 2024). Communication professionals gain insights into how to tailor communication strategies to different audiences, address cultural nuances, and avoid potential pitfalls that can harm an organization's reputation (Sahadevan & Sumangala, 2021).

Moreover, public relations professionals in Nigeria adhere to a strict code of ethics that governs their interactions with stakeholders, the media, and the public and can promote professional conduct and integrity. This knowledge can help communication professionals navigate ethical dilemmas, uphold ethical standards, and maintain the trust and credibility of the profession (Wachid, et al., 2024).

Specific objectives guided this study in exploring key aspects of PR practices in Lagos State. The study sought to examine the level of knowledge among PR practitioners regarding the code of ethics governing their profession, assess the extent to which they adhere to these ethical standards, and identify the factors that drive some practitioners to engage in unethical practices. These objectives provide a comprehensive framework for understanding ethical compliance and challenges within the PR industry in Lagos State.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Public Relations and Ethical Practices

Public relations in Nigeria can be traced back to the pre-colonial era when traditional rulers and community leaders used various forms of communication to maintain and enhance their relationships with their subjects (Amujo & Melewar, 2011). With the

advent of colonialism and modernization, public relations evolved to include a broad range of activities, such as media relations, crisis management, and stakeholder engagement (Constantin & Irwansyah, 2024). Today, public relations is a thriving industry in Nigeria, with many organizations employing PR professionals to manage their communication and reputation.

One of the key ethical principles that public relations practitioners in Nigeria must adhere to is honesty and transparency. These professionals must provide accurate and truthful information to the public, clients, and stakeholders (Novchi et al., 2023). Public relations practitioners can build credibility and trust with their audiences by being honest and transparent in their communications.

However, in a country like Nigeria, where corruption and misinformation are prevalent, public relations practitioners may face challenges in upholding this ethical principle (Nyitze & Inja, 2023). Clients or superiors may pressure them to disseminate false or misleading information to protect the organization's interests (Ethics Code). In such situations, public relations practitioners must have the courage and integrity to resist these pressures and maintain their commitment to honesty and transparency (Neill, 2020).

In a country as diverse and multicultural as Nigeria, it is essential for public relations practitioners to be sensitive to the beliefs and values of different communities and to avoid promoting messages that are offensive or discriminatory. By respecting the diversity of viewpoints and opinions, public relations practitioners can build positive relationships with various stakeholders and create a more inclusive and socially responsible communication strategy (Mundy & Bardhan, 2023). However, navigating the complex cultural landscape of Nigeria can be challenging for public relations practitioners, especially when working with clients who may have different cultural backgrounds and values. In such situations, public relations practitioners need to take the time to understand their audiences' cultural sensitivities and tailor their communication strategies accordingly (Mandela, 2024).

In addition to honesty, transparency, and respect for diversity, public relations practitioners in Nigeria must also uphold the principles of confidentiality and privacy (NWIPR, 2023). It is crucial for these professionals to protect the confidential information of their clients and stakeholders and to ensure that the privacy rights of individuals are respected in all communications (Zoppi, 2023). However, in a digital age where information can be easily shared and disseminated, public relations practitioners may face challenges in maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of sensitive information. They must be vigilant in safeguarding confidential data and adhere to strict data protection regulations to protect individuals' rights and privacy (Weippl & Schrittwieser, 2023).

Public relations practitioners in Today's Business World: Challenges facing Public Relations Practitioners in Nigeria

Public relations (PR) practitioners play a critical role in shaping public perceptions and managing the reputations of organizations and individuals. However, PR practice in Nigeria has significant challenges, particularly in ethics (Mu'azu & Gapsiso, 2024). Ethical considerations in public relations are essential for maintaining trust and credibility.

Practitioners must act with honesty, integrity, and transparency in all dealings, including truthful communication, client confidentiality, and addressing conflicts of interest. When these ethical principles are adhered to, they foster stronger relationships with stakeholders and enhance the reputation of organizations (Suhairi et al., 2023).

One of the main ethical challenges facing PR professionals in Nigeria is the prevalence of unethical practices, including bribery, manipulation of media narratives, and dissemination of false information. According to Idid and Arandas (2016), ethics in PR involves adherence to values and norms that prioritize public and client interests. However, some Nigerian practitioners deviate from these principles, engaging in practices that compromise public trust. Such misconduct tarnishes the individuals' reputations and undermines the entire profession's credibility (Niemann-Struweg & Meintjes, 2008; Lee, 2020). Addressing these issues requires a collective commitment to professional integrity and ethical reform.

Another pressing issue is Nigeria's PR industry's lack of regulation and oversight. Unlike in other countries where PR is regulated, Nigeria lacks formal structures to enforce standards. This regulatory gap allows unqualified individuals to practice PR, leading to widespread unethical practices and diminishing the profession's credibility (Olaoluwa, 2021). A robust regulatory framework would help address these issues by ensuring that only trained and certified practitioners can operate. Such measures could also introduce accountability mechanisms to promote adherence to ethical guidelines.

Balancing clients' interests with ethical considerations is another challenge for PR practitioners in Nigeria. In a competitive business environment, practitioners often face pressure to employ manipulative or deceptive tactics to achieve desired outcomes for their clients (Theaker, 2001). However, such actions can backfire, leading to reputational damage for both the practitioner and the organization they represent. Upholding ethical principles is a professional responsibility and a strategic imperative for maintaining long-term credibility and trust.

The broader socio-political environment in Nigeria also complicates ethical PR practices. Corruption remains pervasive across many sectors, forcing PR professionals to navigate complex moral dilemmas. For instance, during the #EndSARS protests, social media emerged as a powerful tool for exposing injustices and influencing public discourse. PR professionals were instrumental in shaping narratives and managing reputational risks for organizations implicated in the crisis (Alper, 2024). These developments underscore the need for PR practitioners to adopt ethical approaches, even in challenging environments.

Continuous professional development is crucial to fostering ethical excellence in PR. Regular training programs and workshops can help practitioners stay updated on global best practices and emerging trends. Industry associations like the Public Relations

Consultants Association of Nigeria (PRCAN) can provide educational resources and facilitate peer-to-peer learning opportunities (Fullerton & McKinnon, 2015). Such initiatives enhance practitioners' professional competence and promote a culture of ethical accountability within the industry.

Addressing the systemic challenges facing PR practice in Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach. Establishing regulatory frameworks, promoting ethical standards, and prioritizing professional development are key steps toward enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of the profession. By fostering a culture of moral excellence, PR practitioners in Nigeria can build stronger stakeholder relationships, contribute to national development, and align with global best practices in the field. The onus is on practitioners, industry associations, and policymakers to work collaboratively toward these goals.

Two-way Symmetrical Model of Communication

This study adopts the two-way symmetrical model of communication, introduced by Grunig and Hunt (1984) and recognized as one of the most popular public relations communication models (Girsang & Kartikawangi, 2021). The model emphasizes open, honest communication and mutual understanding between organizations and stakeholders, prioritizing dialogue, stakeholder engagement, and conflict resolution through consensus (Sanjaya, 2020). By aligning organizational goals with stakeholder needs, it promotes ethical and socially responsible practices.

Public relations professionals are guided by moral codes, such as the PRSA (Public Relations Society of America) Code of Ethics, which underscore values like honesty, transparency, and integrity to build trust and credibility. These principles highlight the importance of ethical behavior and mutual benefit in public relations practice (Jori White PR, 2024).

Additionally, the study incorporates the absolutist ethical theory, developed by Immanuel Kant (1785), which posits that certain moral principles are universal, objective, and unchanging (Manik, et al., 2023). As noted by Merrill in 1974, this theory asserts that an eternal moral code applies to all, regardless of changing conditions (Odionyenma et al., 2024). In this context, PR professionals are expected to uphold universally accepted ethical principles, such as honesty and professionalism, which serve as guidelines for their conduct (Walton, 2024). Together, these frameworks emphasize the importance of ethical behavior and mutual benefit in public relations practice.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research method and applied in-depth interview research strategies using the interview guide to gather data for the study (Soleha, et al., 2023). The population consisted of 547 registered members of NIPR in Lagos State, Southwest Nigeria, representing both private and non-commercial organizations in the state. This number represents all the registered public relations professionals in the NIPR Lagos State branch.

The researchers used ten (10) key informants for the sample size. This is based on the fact that in qualitative studies, the sample size is usually tiny to avoid redundancy. Sandelowski (1996), as cited in Vasileiou et al. (2018), observes that qualitative research samples are mainly small to support the depth of case-oriented analysis fundamental to the mode of inquiry. Also, Rutledge & C. Hogg (2020) assert that an in-depth interview session is an in-depth discussion in which a small number of people from the target population discuss topics important to the study.

Table 1: Informants Profile

Informant Code	Gender	Years of Membership	PR Specialization
A1	M	12	Corporate Communication
A2	M	10	Internal Communication
A3	F	10	Investor Relations
A4	M	14	Public Affairs and Government Relations
A5	M	13	Community Relations
A6	F	10	Media Relations
A7	F	10	Media Relations
A8	F	11	Crisis Communication
A9	M	13	Crisis Communication
A10	M	14	Corporate Communication

Source: Data Collected by Author (2024)

The criterion for including the sample size was been an active member for 10 years or more. The researchers used a purposive sampling technique to reach out to the participants. Here, the researchers contacted the key informants who met the selection criterion on purpose. Regarding ethics, the researchers obtained the consent of the participants, and they were assured that their identity would be confidential.

Thematic analysis strategies for analyzing qualitative data were employed. The in-depth interview session was conducted through mobile phone calls, as it was more time-friendly and convenient for both the researcher and the participants, who had busy schedules.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: Level of knowledge of PR practitioners in Lagos state on the code of ethics of PR practices

This theme analyses the participants' knowledge of the different PR practitioners in Lagos state on the code of ethics of PR practices. The interviewees said thus;

“Code of ethics of PR practices is the very first lesson provided for an aspiring PR practitioner across the country so virtually all PR personnel are quite informed about the existence and practicalities of the code of ethics of PR practices.”

“Well, just like every profession has its code of ethics that governs the overall existence of the practice which the personnel must conform to, so do PR have established code of ethics that guide PR practices which all must know”

“I am quite vast in the knowledge of the code of ethics of PR practices, having been in the profession for over two decades.”

“As a PR practitioner, the code of ethics of PR practices is the fundamentals of the practice to which every PR practitioner is exposed. So I am quite aware of it.”

“In as much as you are in the field of PR practices, the code of ethics of PR practices is the primal lesson to be disseminated, so I am quite knowledgeable.”

From the data analysis, it is clear that the interviewed PR practitioners are knowledgeable about the different codes of ethics governing the operations of PR practices in Lagos State and, by extension, Nigeria. After years of practice in the PR field, it is clear that a code of ethics is fundamental and essential to the overall PR practices to maximize productivity amongst practitioners.

Research Question 2: Degree to which PR practitioners in Lagos state adhere to the code of ethics of PR practices

This theme analyses the level of PR practitioners in Lagos state who adhere to the code of ethics of PR practices. The interviewees said thus;

“Just like every profession, PR practices and conducts by practitioners have flaunted the different codes and ethics of the practices over the years with little or no repercussions.”

“I am quite certain that PR practitioners in Lagos state adhere to the code of ethics of PR practices, which is not quite encouraging because many codes are broken and regulatory bodies turn blind eyes to it.”

“The level to which PR practitioners in Lagos state adhere to the code of ethics of PR practices is quite low to compare what should be obtainable based on the years of practice.”

“I believe that PR practitioners in Lagos state adhere to the code of ethics of PR practices, which is quite low as many practitioners are not registered members but independent practitioners who are governed by profit maximization.”

“PR practitioners in Lagos state hardly adhere to the code of ethics of PR practices, which leaves little to the imagination as many practitioners work as freelance operators.”

From the responses' analysis, it is quite obvious that practitioners in Lagos State adhere to the code of ethics of PR practices at a low level. Perhaps this could be based on the low level of sanction, and maybe there are few organized workshops where members are oriented on some of the ethical codes of the profession.

Research Question 3: Factors influencing Lagos state PR practitioners to engage in unethical practices.

This theme analyzed various contributing factors that may negatively influence PR practitioners in Lagos state to engage in unethical practices. The interviewees said thus;

“Balancing the interests of clients or organizations with the ethical considerations outlined in various theories and codes of practice can pose a challenge.”

“The alignment of organizational goals with the needs and expectations of stakeholders can stand as a challenge.”

“The lack of technical knowledge and innovations have made PR practice a gamble for all.”

“The laissez-faire attitude of the regulatory bodies more interested in the funds rather than the quality of services makes it challenging for PR practitioners.”

“There is no profession that doesn't have challenges. In public relations practice, economic pressure could also be attributed to one of the reasons practitioners engage in certain unethical practices to meet up.”

“When training or workshops are occasionally organized, the level at which members are reoriented concerning the ethical codes will be low, and such low level can only encourage non-adherence.”

“The quest for top recognition and patronage have made PR practitioners cut many corners in their practices.”

The interviewees believe many factors contribute to PR practitioners' engagement in unethical practices in Lagos State. Some of such factors, as seen in their responses, include conflicting interests of clients and stakeholders, the laissez-faire attitude of the regulatory bodies in tackling the issue to the barest minimum, unhealthy competition amongst practitioners in the quest for fame and recognition, and so on. Over the years, these factors have allegedly eaten into the fabric of PR practices.

Discussion

Research results indicated that participants are knowledgeable regarding the existing code of ethics governing the operations of PR practices in Lagos State and, by extension, Nigeria. This level of knowledge could result from practitioners wanting to know the codes guiding their practice so that they can be properly guided when specific actions are contrary to the laid-down ethical codes.

Based on the key informants' responses, the knowledge level is high. It will be pretty disturbing to know that public relations professionals have a low level of knowledge concerning the ethical codes guiding their practice. Though one cannot deny that some PR professionals may not be too knowledgeable about moral codes, knowing the ethical code that guides your profession in accordance with the extant rules is right. The code of ethics is fundamental and essential to the overall PR practices to maximize productivity amongst practitioners and ensure checks and balances are maintained in their operations in Lagos State.

This result is consistent with the study of Ubwa (2014), who claimed that PR values require practitioners to consider and maintain impartiality at work. As such, every PR practitioner is informed about the codes of ethics governing the profession's operations. Public relations practitioners who uphold the absolutist ethical theory would want to behave in a universally acceptable manner. Therefore, it will be appropriate to encourage practitioners engaging in unethical practices to understand and internalize the suggestions of the absolutist ethical theory and start doing right.

Further results showed that the participants interviewed indicated a low adherence to the code of ethics. Research has revealed that this low level of adherence to the ethical codes could be attributed to the alleged lack of guidance and training from regulatory bodies that prioritize numbers over the quality of services provided by these PR professionals. As a result, the basic principles and codes that guide PR practices are undermined, which contradicts PR professionals' primary duties and roles in organizations and society.

The result aligns with the study of Chimeremeze (2023), who found that media practitioners engage in unethical behavior contrary to their ethical codes. Similarly, Patricia (2024) revealed in their study that media practitioners engaged in numerous unethical practices. In most cases, they hardly adhered to their code of practice, which has adversely affected their level of credibility in the eyes of the public. This finding implies that people will quickly lose faith in public relations practitioners, and the worst is that it will affect the credibility of the regulatory bodies controlling the profession. The truth is that the issue of professionals' non-adherence to the public relations ethical code is alarming.

Also in line with this finding, Haque and Ahmad (2017) noted in their study that applying the responsible advocacy theory can help practitioners establish universal principles and moral values, prioritizing human dignity over material gains and benefits. If used as Haque and Ahmad suggested, this theory means PR practitioners need to weigh their actions in terms of the benefit or harm they will cause before taking such

action, as well as respecting people involved in certain situations, which is even one of the ethical codes of the profession, and then ensuring proper distribution of justice. Any practitioner who upholds this theory, the two-way symmetric model, and the absolutist ethical theory will be guided appropriately when taking action.

Findings revealed numerous factors that influenced the engagement of PR practitioners in Lagos State in indulging in unethical practices, which is highly unacceptable. There is a demand for complete adherence to laid-down ethical practices to boost the profession's credibility. Still, some noticeable factors contributing to ensuring compliance with these moral precepts have been minimal over the years. Some of such factors, as noted in participants' responses, include economic pressure, occasional training and workshops for PR professionals, conflicting interests of clients and stakeholders, the laissez-faire attitude of the regulatory bodies in tackling unethical issues to the lowest level, unhealthy competitions amongst practitioners in the quest for fame and recognition and so on. Over the years, these factors have allegedly eaten into the fabric of PR practices.

These findings are in tandem with those of Amujo and Melewar (2011), who revealed that one of the contemporary challenges impacting the practice of public relations in Nigeria is the presence of quacks who know nothing about the profession and hence disparage the profession's name. Also in agreement with this finding is the study of Olaoluwa (2021), who revealed that public relations is not without unethical practices.

The finding further showed that PR practitioners are more preoccupied with the desire to fulfill the interest of their employers, their clients, and most importantly, their self-interest rather than doing what their profession prescribed. This finding implies that the issue of non-adherence to ethical codes due to these factors will continue except for drastic measures taken to save the profession's image. In doing so, there is a need to apply the theoretical models this study underpinned to enlighten practitioners on the need to adhere to professional, ethical codes to paint the profession in a positive light.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results, it can therefore be concluded that public relations practitioners in Lagos are knowledgeable about the ethical code of their profession, though despite their knowledge, the level of adherence to the ethical code is abysmally low, as the result indicated. This was attributed to economic pressures, occasional training by the regulatory body, conflicting interests, and other bottlenecks. It is important to stress that adherence to ethical codes of practice by public relations practitioners is crucial for maintaining trust, credibility, and transparency in their interactions with stakeholders. By upholding ethical standards, practitioners can build and sustain positive relationships with stakeholders, enhance their organization's reputation, and contribute to the overall ethical conduct of the industry. Studying practitioners' adherence to ethical codes of practice is essential for identifying the factors influencing ethical decision-making in

public relations and developing strategies to promote ethical behavior among practitioners.

By examining the ethical challenges practitioners face in the digital age, vast contributions to advancing ethical communication practices in public relations are encouraged. The study's recommendations include: 1. Constant and routine information-filled training sessions, workshops, and seminars should be organized by regulatory bodies to expose new members and registered members to the core ethical values and principles governing the profession to avoid misdemeanors and mishaps amongst practitioners. 2. Strict regulatory principles and actions should be enforced on erring PR practitioners in Lagos state to deter others from breaking or twisting the code of ethics of PR practices. 3. The strict monitoring of PR practitioners in Lagos State practices should be encouraged to ensure strict adherence to the code of ethics governing the practices.

BIODATA

Chuddy C. Oduenyi is a journalist, historian, and public relations consultant. He is the managing director and chief executive officer of Compact Communication Limited, a leading public relations consultancy based in Lagos, Nigeria. He is also an adjunct member of the faculty at Pan Atlantic University in Lagos, where he lectures at the School of Media and Communication. He is also a facilitator at the Lagos Business School.

Etumnu Emeka Williams is a doctoral student at Imo State University, Owerri. He was among UNESCO's top three research prize winners across the non-Sahel West African region in 2020. He has published articles in reputable journals. He is also a reviewer for reputable journals indexed in Scopus. Email: etumnuemeka@gmail.com

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, Z., & Threadgold, T. (2008). Towards the professionalization of public relations in Malaysia: Perception management and strategy development. *Public Relations Review*, 34(3), 285-287. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2008.04.003>.
- Adeyeye B., Amodu, O., Odiboh, O., Omojola, O., Adesina, E. & Ben-Enukora, C.A. (2020). A SWOT analysis of indigenous language use in agricultural radio programming in Nigeria. In A. Salawu & K. Oyesomi (eds), *Emerging Trends in Indigenous Language Media, Communication, Gender, and Health* (P. 188-209). Hershey (PA): IGI Global.
- Akintola, M. I., Ismail, O., & Emmanuel, I. (2023). A Literature Review of Public Relations Research in Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Review*, 6(3), 312-344. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380781460_A_Literature_Review_Of_Public_Relations_Research_In_Nigeria_Akintola_Oluwalayomi_Iyinoluwa_Omipidan_Ismail_Ifeduba_Emanuel
- Alper, D. Ö. (2024). Public relations discourse on X (Twitter) and analysis of public relations. *Journal of Communication & Public Relations*, 3(1), 14-26. <https://doi.org/10.37535/105003120242>
- Amin, A. (2024, May 31). *Exploring the top trends shaping the public relations industry [2024]*. LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/exploring-top-trends-shaping-public-relations-industry-al-amin-mt08c>
- Amujo, O. C., & Melewar, T. C. (2011). Contemporary challenges impacting on the practice of public relations in Nigeria (1990-2011). *Prism Journal*, 6(3), 1-20. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/304784001_Contemporary_Challenges_Impacting_on_the_Practice_of_Public_Relations_in_Nigeria_1990-2011
- Angese, J.E., Okoro, L.N. & Etumnu, E.W. (2022). Assessment of the adherence to journalism code of ethics by journalists in Bayelsa State. *IMSU Journal of Communication Studies*, 3(1), 170-183. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4205524
- Bilodeau, H., & Khalid, A. (2024, July 25). *The Spread of Misinformation: A Multivariate Analysis of the Relationship between Individual Characteristics and Fact-checking Behaviours of Canadians*. Statistics Canada: Canada's national statistical agency / Statistique Canada : Organisme statistique national du Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/22-20-0001/222000012024003-eng.htm>
- Boyton, L. (2025). Public Relations Industry Standards and Ethics. In *Public Relations Writing: Essential Tools for Effective Storytelling* (1st ed., pp. 17-35). SAGE Publications. https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-assets/143132_book_item_143132.pdf
- Bowen, S. A., & Stacks, D. W. (2013). Toward the establishment of ethical standardization in public relations research, measurement and evaluation. *Public*

- Relations Journal*, 7(3), 1-28. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287216590_Toward_the_Establishment_of_Ethical_Standardization_in_Public_Relations_Research_Measurement_and_Evaluation_1
- Chimeremeze, O. U. (2023). *Adherence to the Journalism Ethical Code of Conduct by Reporters in IMO State* [Doctoral dissertation]. <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.28896.87044> or https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376486724_Adherence_To_The_Journalism_Ethical_Code_Of_Conduct_By_Reporters_In_Imo_State
- Constantin, N., & Irwansyah, I. (2024). Corporate communication, public relations, and mobility in communication crisis handling in the insurance industry. *Gema Wiralodra*, 15(1), 247-262. <https://doi.org/10.31943/gw.v15i1.626>
- Efendi, E., Hsb, S. P., Siregar, S. F., Harahap, Y. A., Br Purba, E. R., & Harahap, M. Y. (2024). Analisis Pentingnya Kode Etik public relation dalam Menjaga Citra Perusahaan. *El-Mujtama: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 4(3), 380-390. <https://doi.org/10.47467/elmutjama.v4i3.1557>
- Ethics Code. (2024). Retrieved from Nigerian Institute of Public Relations: <http://nipr.org.ng/index.php/about-nipr/ethics-code>
- Fullerton, J. A., & McKinnon, L. M. (2015). U.S. public relations students' perceptions of PR: What college students think about PR Education and the profession. *Public Relations Journal*, 5(3) 1-17.
- Girsang, C. N., & Kartikawangi, D. (2021). Two-way symmetrical communication pattern: Company strategy to build engagement through social media. *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 13(2), 271. <https://doi.org/10.24912/jk.v13i2.11191>
- Haque, S., & Ahmad, J. (2017). Ethics in public relations and responsible advocacy Theory. *Journal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 2(5), 44-56. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2017-3301-10>
- Hou, J. Z., & Johnston, J. (2024). Putting ethics of care into public relations: Toward a multi-level agency model. *Public Relations Review*, 50(5), 102495. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2024.102495>
- Idid, A. S., & Arandas, M. F. (2016). Professional values, ethics and professionalism of public relations practitioners. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 32(1), 287-311. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-20163201-17>
- Igbekele, O. A. (2012). Evaluation of public relations practice in public tertiary institutions in South-Western Nigeria, *AKU Journal of Social and Management Sciences* 3(1), 1-85.
- Jackson, D., & Moloney, K. (2019). Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown. A qualitative study of ethical PR practice in the United Kingdom. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 3(2) 87-101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X18810732>
- Jori White PR. (2024, October 8). *Ethics in public relations*. Jori White PR London. <https://www.joriwhitepr.co.uk/articles/ethics-in-public-relations>

- Joseph, C. K. (2023). Cultural sensitivity in global public relations campaigns. *American Journal of Public Relations*, 2(1), 20-27. <https://doi.org/10.47672/ajpr.1629>
- Keghku, T., Tarnaha, A. S., & Abdul, M. (2023). Assessment of Public Relations and Power Relations Dynamics in Nigeria's Multicultural Society. *BENUE Journal of Social Sciences*, 9(1), 141-160. <https://bsum.edu.ng/journals/bjss/vol9n1/files/14.pdf>
- Lee, S. (2020). Ethical challenges in digital communication: A comparative analysis of public relations practitioners. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 45(4), 512-529.
- Mandela, K. (2024). Influence of cultural differences on global PR campaigns. *Journal of Public Relations*, 3(1), 52-63. <https://doi.org/10.47941/jpr.1775>
- Manik, W. D., Wulandari, Fera, Moyau, D. O., & Muntee, A. (2023). Ethical Reflections on Immanuel Kant's Moral Philosophy and "[Adolescent] Elinquency". *JOLALI*, 2(2), 64-79. <https://jurnal.polines.ac.id/index.php/jolali/article/viewFile/4769/108784>
- Milovan, V., Dašić, D., & Vuković, A. (2023). Ethical and Legal Aspects of Public relations. *Pravo - Teorija i Praksa*, 40(4), 93-111. <https://doi.org/10.5937/ptp2304093V> or https://www.researchgate.net/publication/377717048_Ethical_and_legal_aspects_of_Public_relations
- Mu'azu, Y., & Gapsio, N. D. (2024). A Review of Public Relations Regulations and Public Freedom in Nigeria. *The Nigerian Journal of Communication*. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/njcomm/article/view/284909/268465>
- Mundy, D., & Bardhan, N. (2023). Charting theoretical directions for DEI in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 35(5-6), 281-286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726x.2023.2251786>
- Neill, M. S. (2020). Public Relations Professionals Identify Ethical Issues, Essential Competencies and Deficiencies. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 36(1), 51-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1846539>
- Niemann-Struweg, I., & Meintjes, C. (2008). The professionalism debate in South African public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 1(3), 224-229. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2008.03.029>
- Nigeria, T. N. (2012). *Research Methods*. The National Open University of Nigeria.
- Nnolim, Nwaizugbo, & Oko. (2014). Professionalism in Service Marketing: The Role of Standards and Ethics: A Study of the Nigeria Institute of Public Relations. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 4(3), 213-234. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v9n6p213>
- Novchi, R. W., Hanafi, K., Haris, A., & Huda, N. (2023). Media Public Relations. *Jurnal UMRI*, 3(2), 37-51. <https://ejurnal.umri.ac.id/index.php/KomunikasiMu/article/download/5455/2386>

- NWIPR. (2023, October 9). *Ethical PR: Upholding transparency and integrity in communications*. NgwomeninPR - My WordPress Blog. <https://ngwomeninpr.org/ethical-pr-upholding-transparency-and-integrity-in-communications/>
- Nyitze, G. T., Inja, N., & Agbam, W. E. (2023). Public Relations Ethics and Professionalism in Nigeria. *Elizade University Journal of Innovative Communications and Media Studies*, 2, 140-156. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372133927_Public_Relations_Ethics_And_Professionalism_In_Nigeria
- Odionyenma, C.U., Iwuchukwu, N.V., Anyanwu, P. U. & Martins-Eteng, C. (2024). An evaluation of conformance to the journalism code of conduct among Nigeria Union of Journalists members in Imo State. *IMSU Journal of Communication Studies*, 8(2), 169-180. <https://www.imsujcs.com/Journals/2024/issue2/14.pdf>
- Oladokun, B. D., Aruwa, J. E., Ottah, G. A., & Ajani, Y. A. (2024). Misinformation and disinformation in the era of social media: The need for fact-checking skills. *Journal of Information and Knowledge*, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.17821/srels/2024/v61i1/171266>
- Olaoluwa, R.(2021).Exploring the factors affecting the ethical values of public Relations practice in Lagos State, Nigeria. *Covenant Journal of Communication (CJOC)*, 8 (2),45-64. <https://journals.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/index.php/cjoc/article/view/2861>
- Pascucci, F., Savelli, E., & Gistri, G. (2023). How digital technologies reshape marketing: Evidence from a qualitative investigation. *Italian Journal of Marketing*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43039-023-00063-6>
- Patricia, E. C. (2024). Ethical challenges in journalism practice: Balancing media ownership interests and public responsibility. *IAA Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(1), 46-51. <https://doi.org/10.59298/iaajss/2024/101.46.50000>
- Pepper, E. P., Olori, H. O., Kori-Siakpere, U., Oviawe, R. E., Idiong, O. U., Edohoe, S., Sifuna, E. B., Ododa, C., Okpro, I. J., Adavize, L. I., & Onozare, Y. R. (2024). Cultural diversity, communication, inclusivity and collaboration in Nigerian workplaces: A review. *South Asian Journal of Social Studies and Economics*, 21(11), 100-110. <https://doi.org/10.9734/sajsse/2024/v21i11905>
- Rutledge, P., & C. Hogg, J. L. (2020). In-Depth Interviews. In *International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*. <https://10.1002/9781119011071.iemp0019> or https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345737833_In-Depth_Interviews
- Sahadevan, P., & Sumangala, M. (2021). Effective cross-cultural communication for international business. *Shanlax International Journal of Management*, 8(4), 24-33. <https://doi.org/10.34293/management.v8i4.3813>
- Sanjaya, S. (2021). Facebook digital marketing: A thematic analysis of the practice of public relations models of star-rated hotels in Bandung. *Jurnal Riset Bisnis dan Investasi*, 6(2), 52-63. <https://doi.org/10.35313/jrbi.v6i2.1932>

- Shahbazi, M., & Bunker, D. (2024). Social media trust: Fighting misinformation in the time of crisis. *International Journal of Information Management*, 77, 102780. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2024.102780>
- Soleha, S., Utomo, A. G., & Herari, N. (2023). Identifying key service and quality dimensions as public relations strategy in RSUP Persahabatan. *Jurnal Ilmiah LISKI (Lingkar Studi Komunikasi)*, 9(2), 64. <https://doi.org/10.25124/liski.v9i2.6098>
- Stanić, K. M. (2020). How the theory of information and journalism ethics contributes to the ethics of public relations: six principles from the dialogue between codes of ethics and Luka Brajnović's legacy. *Church, Communication and Culture*, 5(1), 36–62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2020.1713013>
- Suhairi, S., Fachri, F. N., Khinaya, M., & Pangestu, A. (2023). Business Communication Ethics. *International Journal of Economic Research and financial Accounting (IJERFA)*, 1(4), 202 - 213. <https://ijerfa.afdifaljournal.com/index.php/ijerfa/article/download/47/43/315>
- Theaker, A. (2001). *The Public Relations Handbook*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203461334>
- Vasileiou, K., Barnett, J., Thorpe, S. & Young, T. (2018). Characterizing and justifying sample size sufficiency in interview-based studies: systematic analysis of qualitative health research over 15 years. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 18, 148,1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0594-7>
- Wachid, I. B., Wulandari, M. P., & Nasution, Z. (2024). Navigating ethical challenges in Indonesian digital public relations practices. *Bricolage : Jurnal Magister Ilmu Komunikasi*, 10(2), 267. <https://doi.org/10.30813/bricolage.v10i2.5478>
- Walton, M. (2024, January 3). *The importance of ethics in PR: Why ethical conduct is critical to success*. Agility PR Solutions. <https://www.agilitypr.com/pr-news/public-relations/the-importance-of-ethics-in-pr-why-ethical-conduct-is-critical-to-success/>
- Weippl, E., & Schrittwieser, S. (2023). Introduction to Security and Privacy. In *Introduction to Digital Humanism* (1st ed., p. 397–414). Springer Nature Link.
- Yartey, D., Omojola, O., Amodu, L., Ndubueze, N., Adeyeye, B. & Adesina, E. (2021). Personal data collection and usage for mobile marketing: Customer awareness and perception. *WSEAS Transactions on Business and Economics* 18, <https://doi.org/10.37394/23207.2021.18.5>.
- Zoppi, M. (2023, May 26). *Understanding the importance of confidentiality: Key insights*. Zoppi & Co. <https://www.zoppi.co.uk/blog/understanding-the-importance-of-confidentiality-key-insights>