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E-mail: journalism@davidpublishing.org; journalism.cfp@davidpublishing.com
order@davidpublishing.com; shelly@davidpublishing.com

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Motivations of Using Social Media Through Smartphones Among University Students in the United Arab Emirates

Khayrat Ayyad

University of Sharjah, Sharjah, UAE

The aim of the study was to investigate gratifications of using social media among university students in the United Arab Emirates. Adopting the uses and gratification approach, the study investigates how the students utilize social media to gratify their personal, social, psychological, and educational needs. The study uses a questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 420 students from two universities in the UAE: University of Sharjah and Zayed University. In each university, two colleges were selected to represent art colleges and sciences colleges. The findings of the study show that 69.3% of the students are accessing social media more than five hours daily. 79.0% of the students access the social media through their smartphones. The main social media accessed are WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook. The main reasons of using social media are seeking information, communicating with friends, consuming time, and following up public affairs.

Keywords: social media, motivations, smartphones, university's students, UAE

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed ever-increasing technological advances leaving an imprint on all aspects of life. One of these advances is the smartphone and its numerous applications or apps offering quick access to the Internet and social media. Social media have penetrated in the everyday life of Internet users, and the increasing pervasiveness of smartphones is only strengthening this phenomenon (Khan, 2017).

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) generally leads the Middle East Arab countries in ICT rankings, with a well-developed and technologically advanced telecom sector and high levels of mobile and broadband penetration.

According to the Global Information Technology Report (2016), the UAE occupies the first position in the Arab region in terms of the readiness of its telecommunications networks, according to a study published by the World Economic Forum in 2016, and 26th position globally among 139 countries. The network readiness index measures the capacity of an economy to benefit from information and communication technology, to increase competitiveness and development. The network readiness index in the report is based on information gathered by organizations, including the International Telecommunications Union, the World Bank, the United Nations, and other international organizations.

The UAE has two fixed network and mobile operators: the original incumbent Etisalat and operator du, which launched services in February 2007. Fixed-line competition increased recently with the TRA announcing in late 2015 that fixed network sharing had finally been implemented across the country with both operators

now able to offer and market services in locations previously withheld.

In 2017, the broadband market in the UAE is one of the most advanced both regionally and globally. Prior to the fixed network sharing agreement introduced in late 2015, both Etisalat and Du operated FttH networks in separate areas—Du in the Dubai free trade zones and Etisalat in the rest of the country. Besides FttH/FttP, other internet technologies available in the UAE include ADSL, leased lines, Wi-Fi, and mobile networks.

The UAE government at both federal and emirate level has been proactive in the digital economy and digital media sectors, with programs to encourage computer and internet use. Like other countries in the Middle East, the UAE aims to transition into a “knowledge based and highly productive economy” by 2021 (BuddeComm Report, 2017).

As for the usage of new technology in the UAE, of the 9.58 million people of populations, around 8.81 million (92.0%) are active internet users. Mobile phone usage in the UAE increased in March 2018 to 228.3 phones per 100 people; the increase in the use of mobile phones in the UAE also saw an increase in the number of telecom subscribers in March 2017, by more than 132,000 new subscriptions compared to February. This led to a jump in the total number of cumulative subscriptions to 19.835 million (BuddeComm Report, 2018).

Social Media Usage in the UAE

Social media is defined as the means of interactions among people in which they communicate, collaborate, and share information online in a social dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community (Gan, Lee, & Li, 2017). It is a platform, where users can jointly investigate network contents, share their experience, and build up a relation for different purposes. Social media is operationally defined as the sum of blogs, social networking sites, micro blogs, content sharing sites, Wikis, and interactive video-gaming sites that allow users to co-construct and share content (Kuss & Griffiths, 2017).

The year 2015 has proved to be a time of social media prominence with phenomenal digital growth in UAE and across the world. More than 5.4 million of internet users in the UAE (61.0%) are active in the social media; nearly 4.6 million of them are accessing social media through mobile phones, which means that 85.2% of social media user’s access their accounts through their mobile devices (Arabian Gazette, 2018).

Nevertheless, mobile users spend only three hours 45 minutes online on average. The PCs and laptops are not far behind, with 44% of internet users still using them to access the net. PC and laptop users spend more time online, on an average more than five hours. Tablet usage is slowly gaining momentum as witnessed by the 6% of internet users who go online using a tablet. However, tablet users spend on an average three hours and 35 minutes online (Ayyad, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Since the advent of the mobile phone in the late nineties, it is witnessing successive developments made it one of the most popular means of communication between all segments of society, especially the youth. When it appeared, the basic function of the mobile phone was to make phone calls only, but now the mobile phone has many functions, especially those smartphones that have access to the Internet.

Research on the mobile phone indicates that the most popular category is the university youth category. This is due to the ability of the modern mobile phone and its ability to enter all forms of communication process, thus becoming an integrated social network in the hands of the individual and an interactive means of

communication through different applications, interactive media, and diverse social networks (Sapacz, Rockman, & Clark, 2016).

Social media have penetrated in the everyday life of Internet users, and the increasing pervasiveness of smartphones is only strengthening this phenomenon. Nowadays, these two technologies are intertwined, since smartphones are becoming more and more pervasive, especially in the student population.

The 21st century has witnessed ever-increasing technological advances leaving an imprint on all aspects of life. One of these advances is the smartphone and its numerous applications or apps offering quick access to the Internet and social media.

Many researches proposed social, psychological, and personal motivations for social media use among youth and adolescents. These motivations include entertainment, information seeking, personal utility, online communication, online self-disclosure, identity formation, social interaction, social relationship formation, mood regulation, and a need to conform to group norms (Griffiths, Kuss, & Demetrovics, 2014).

Researchers have applied different theories and models to explain adolescent motivations of using social media. According to Throuvala (2019), two of the most prominent theories are the Self-Determination Theory and Uses and Gratifications Theory, where gratifications drive mobile social media use by emphasizing the affective, integrative, and mobile dimensions of adolescent motivations.

Rooted in the functional view of media, the uses and gratifications approach to media use assumes that audiences are aware of their social and psychological needs and actively seek the media to fulfill them (Michael, Wotring, & Forrest, 1995). Therefore, the uses and gratifications approach assumes that audience members actively seek out the mass media, fulfill expectations, and actively select media and media content to satisfy individual needs (Stephen & Owen, 2004). It may be argued that the uses and gratifications approach shifts the emphasis of media communication studies from the effect perspective to an audience perspective (Alonzo & Aiken, 2004).

Leung (2003) argued that the most important assumption of this approach is that the audience is active and media use is goal-directed. Therefore, the public are self-aware—knowing and articulating their reasons for using the media—that they consider the media as a means of satisfying their needs.

Meanwhile, researches criticized the uses and gratifications approach in many ways. There have been three main lines of criticism: one related to its theoretical underpinnings and associated methods; another to its social and political implications; a third to its way of handling cultural phenomena (McQuail, 1997).

Despite these types of criticism, many researchers argue that this approach stands as a dominant paradigm. It has organized much work, continues to lend itself to further elaboration and application in research, and can provide a powerful framework for investigating the media in a wide social and cultural context (McQuail, 2010).

With the advent of digital media, many researchers argue that the uses and gratifications approach appears ideally suited to studying the Internet and new media (Lin & Jeffries, 1998). While individuals can passively allow television content to wash over them, online technologies such as e-mail, bulletin boards, and chat rooms are interactive applications that require audience members to be active users.

Similarly, web users actively search out information when they click on links or employ search engines, suggesting web use is goal-directed and that users are aware of the needs they are attempting to satisfy. Many studies of web gratifications either relied on or adapted gratifications from traditional media studies.

Later on, researchers realized that the unique attributes of the Internet led to gratifying the needs not served by other media such as personal fulfillment, social surveillance, identity, and free expression (Kaye & Johnson, 2004).

The uses and gratifications approach is now widely accepted for nearly all kinds of mediated communication tools. Many studies applied this approach to examine audience motivations to use a certain type of mediated communication whenever a new communication technology is introduced. For example, the uses and gratification approach was adopted to study how university students use new technology, including VCRs and the Internet (Chan & Fang, 2007). In this respect, the uses and gratification approach is applied in this study.

Research Questions and Methodology

As this study aims at investigating gratifications of using social media among university students in the UAE, it answers the following questions:

- (1) What are patterns of using social media by university students in the UAE?
- (2) What are main motivations among students to access social media through their smartphones?
- (3) To what extent students use social media for academic purposes?
- (4) Are gender and college of students affecting their motivations to use social media?

To answer the above questions, a questionnaire was designed to collect data from a sample of 420 students from two universities in the UAE: University of Sharjah (UoS) and Zayed University (ZU). In each university, four colleges were selected; two of them represent art programs and the others represent sciences programs.

Many researchers argued that universities are the most suitable place to study usage of new communication technologies. Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2010) argued that universities are a suitable place for technological diffusion. Goldfarb (2006) also stated that universities taught students how to use the Internet and provide them with necessary facilities to go online.

All students in the UoS and ZU have facilities to access the Internet for various administrative and course-related purposes. Therefore, the Internet becomes a mass-mediated medium in university life. Students use it for a wide variety of academic purposes such as getting information and data to complete coursework, conducting research, and communicating with faculty members. Therefore, it may be argued that the UoS and ZU provide a good environment for the study.

Finding of the Study

Finding of the study will be presented in terms of research questions as follows.

Research Q1: What Are Patterns of Using Social Media by University Students in the UAE?

Daily use of social media. As for patterns of using social media among university students in the UAE, rate of surfing social media and media used to access social media are dealt with. The following table shows rate of accessing social media among university student in the UAE.

Table 1 shows that 68.6% of students are using social media five hours or more and around 18.0% uses social media between three and five hours. This finding indicates that nearly 87.0% of the university students in the UAE are using social media for more than three hours daily, which is considered as a highly rate of using social media according the international standards.

As for the differences within studied universities, the above table indicates that there are no obvious differences in rate of using social media among students in both UoS and ZU. It seems that all university students may be considered as heavy users of social media.

Table 1

Daily Rate of Using Social Media Within Universities

Rate of usage	UoS	ZU	Total
Less than an hour	8 (2.7%)	3 (2.5%)	11 (2.6%)
1-3 hours	34 (11.3%)	12 (10.0%)	46 (11.0%)
3-5 hours	56 (18.7%)	19 (15.8%)	75 (17.9%)
5 or more	202 (67.3%)	86 (71.7%)	288 (68.6)
Total	300 (100.0%)	120 (100.0%)	420 (100.0%)

Devices to access social media. In 2017, Statistics of International Telecommunications Unions indicate that nearly 50.0% of internet's users in the UAE are accessing the web through their cellphones (Ayyad, 2017). The following table show social media traffic across devices among university students in the UAE.

Table 2 shows that nearly 79.0% of university students are accessing social media across their cellphones. This may be understood in terms of the broadband market in the UAE, as it is one of the most advanced both regionally and globally. As mention above, in 2017, of the 9.58 million people of populations, around 8.81 million (92.0%) are active internet users. Mobile phone usage in the UAE increased in March 2018 to 228.3 phones per 100 people (BuddeComm Report, 2018), and more than 95.0% of university students have advanced smartphones: iPhone or Samsung.

Table 2

*Social Media Traffic Across Devices * University*

Device of accessing	UoS	ZU	Total
Desktop	16 (5.3%)	7 (5.8%)	23 (5.5%)
Laptop	39 (13.0%)	16 (13.3%)	55 (13.1%)
Cellphone	237 (79.0%)	94 (78.3%)	331 (78.8%)
Cyber	8 (2.7%)	3 (2.5%)	11 (2.6%)
Total	300 (100.0%)	120 (100.0%)	420 (100.0%)

It seems that there are no vital differences in accessing social media across smartphones among students of both surveyed universities. Table 2 shows how students access social media in UoS and ZU. The above table indicates that students in both universities are accessing social media mainly across their cellphones with a percentage of 79.0%. Statistical analysis also shows that there are no significant differences among university students in accessing social media through smartphones.

Research Q2: What Are Main Social Media Accessed by Students Through Their Cell PHONES?

Main usage of social media. The following table shows the main usage of social media among university's students in the UAE.

Table 3 shows that the most important social medium for the students of universities in the UAE is WhatsApp. This first highly significant preferred website comes with a mean of 4.6 and with a very high statistical significance; this may be understood by recognizing the high capability of WhatsApp to share textual messages related to courses related instructions, which seems to be necessary for the students.

The second and third social media are Instagram and Facebook, which come with means of 4.24 and 4.2 respectively. The students also access YouTube as a social media with a mean of 3.79 with also a high statistical significance.

Table 3

Preferred Websites (One-Sample T-Test)*

Social media	Mean**	Std. Dev.	Sig.***
WhatsApp	4.43	1.10	0.00
Instagram	4.24	1.21	0.00
Facebook	4.20	1.32	0.00
YouTube	3.79	1.27	0.00
Twitter	2.84	1.58	0.04
Snapchat	2.17	1.54	0.00
Google-plus	1.97	1.42	0.00
Flipagram	1.32	0.86	0.00
MySpace	1.30	0.83	0.00
LinkedIn	1.23	0.73	0.00

Notes. * N (sample) = 420; ** Test value = 3; *** Confidence interval = 95%, Sig. = Significance, SD = Standard Definition.

On the other hand, other social media like Snapchat, Google-plus, Myspace, and LinkedIn are rarely preferred by the students. Means of these media are less than 2.83.

Motivation of using social media. Table 4 shows how social media gratify needs of the students. The most two important reasons for the students to access and use social media are to get information and to communicate with friends and colleagues. The mean of each of the above two reasons exceeds 4.4, with a high statistical significance.

Table 4

Motivations for the Usage of Social Media (One-Sample T-Test)*

Motivation	Mean**	SD	Sig.***
To get information	4.42	0.89	0.00
Communicate with friends and colleagues	4.42	0.96	0.00
Consuming time	4.38	1.05	0.00
To share fun jokes with my friends	3.95	3.63	0.00
To follow up public affairs	3.90	1.21	0.00
Recording my special moments	3.89	1.30	0.00
Recording video clips	3.82	1.30	0.00
Feeling lonely without accessing social media	3.70	1.49	0.00
Navigation	3.61	1.42	0.00
Listening to music and songs	3.51	1.43	0.00
Carry out transaction and services	3.38	1.38	0.00
Shopping	3.35	1.43	0.00
To eliminate the boredom I find in some lectures	2.76	1.41	0.00
To get new friends	2.68	1.47	0.00
To share funny clips, and jokes with colleagues and friends	2.67	1.58	0.00
To avoid feeling ashamed when dealing with others	2.11	1.38	0.00

Notes. * N (sample) = 420; ** Test value = 3; *** Confidence interval = 95%, Sig. = Significance, SD = Standard Definition.

The second most reason for student to access and use social media is to consume time, which comes with a mean of 4.38, with a high statistical significance.

The students also access the social media for many other important reasons. Means of these reasons exceed 3.5 with a statistical significance. They use the social media to share fun jokes with my friends; to follow up public affairs; to record special moments and video clips; to complete assignments and study duties; to follow up academic status; to navigate the internet; to listen to music and songs because they feel lonely without their cellphones. They also use social media to carry out transaction and services and for shopping.

It seems that the students are active and goal-oriented in using social media to satisfy their individual, social, psychological, and cultural needs.

Research Q3: To What Extent Students Use Social Media for Academic Purposes?

Using social media for academic purposes. Concerning students' use of social media for academic purposes, Table 5 shows that the students are active in utilizing social media to achieve their academic performance.

Table 5

Motivations for the Usage of Social Media for Academic Purposes (One-Sample Statistics T-Test)*

Academic purposes	Mean	Std. D.	Sig.
Accessing academic and teaching materials	4.4	1.0	0.00
Connection with instructors	4.3	1.1	0.00
Sharing academic materials	4.3	1.1	0.00
Getting new duties	4.3	1.1	0.00
Following study instructions	4.3	1.0	0.00
Completing assignments and study duties	3.8	1.2	0.00
Following up academic status	3.7	1.3	0.00
Drop and add courses	3.6	1.4	0.00

Notes. * N (sample) = 420; ** Test value = 3; *** Confidence interval = 95%, Sig. = Significance, SD = Standard Definition.

They are using social media for five main purposes: to access teaching materials, to contact instructors, to share educational materials, to get new duties; and to follow up study instructions. Means of these five purposes exceed 4.3 with a high statistical significance.

Students also utilize social media to complete their assignments and duties and follow up their academic status. These findings may be understood in terms of technical facilities produced by universities in the UAE.

Using social media for academic purposes by university. Table 6 shows that there are no significant differences between the students in UoS and ZU universities in utilizing social media for academic purposes. This may be explained in terms of the availability of wireless access to the internet across all campuses of both universities, indoors, and outdoors. Each university has its educational application. Websites of both universities are incorporated with their social media accounts such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram.

Table 6

Accessing Social Media in Both Universities (Independent Sample T-Test)

University	N	Mean	Std. D.	Sig.	F
Sum of academic	UoS 300	18.7	3.7	0.47	0.51
	ZU 120	18.8	3.5		

Research Q4: Are Gender and College of Students Affecting Their Motivations to Use Social Media?

Gender of students and social media usage and motivations. The following table indicates that gender of students has no significant effect on rate of accessing social media. Sum of means for male students is 28.7 and for female students 29.4. On the other hand, gender of the students has a significant effect on motivations of using social media. It seems that the female students have more motivations (Mean = 70.3) than male students (Mean = 66.4) to use social media, and with a statistical significant (Sig. = 0.001).

Table 7

Social Media Usage and Motivations Gender (Independent Sample T-Test)*

Sex		N	Mean	Std. D.	Sig.	F
Sum of cellphone use	Male	124	28.7	7.1	0.096	2.78
	Female	296	29.4	5.8		
Sum of motivations	Male	124	66.4	16.2	0.001	11.96
	Female	296	70.3	12.2		

College of students and social media usage and motivations. As for the relationship between college of students and social media' usage and motivations, Table 8 shows that students of both art colleges and sciences colleges have nearly the same mean (69.0) of motivations to use social media.

On the other hand, there some differences of rate of using social media between students of art colleges and sciences colleges. It seems that student of sciences colleges are using social media (M = 30.6) more than students of art colleges (M = 28.2), but without statistical significant.

Table 8

Social Media Usage and Motivations College (Independent Sample T-Test)*

College		N	Mean	Std. D.	Sig.	F
Sum of cellphone use	Art Colleges	251	28.2	6.3	0.06	3.67
	Sciences Colleges	169	30.6	5.7		
Sum of motivations	Art Colleges	251	69.2	13.8	0.83	0.04
	Sciences Colleges	169	69.0	13.3		

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion is dealt with in terms of answering the study's questions and interpreting the theoretical framework. The aim of the study was to investigate gratifications of using social media among university students in the United Arab Emirates. The results of the study show that more than 68.0% of the university student access social media at least five hours daily and more than 78.0% of the students are accessing social media through their smartphones. The most frequent social media accessed are WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. The students access the social media extensively and use it to gratify their personal, social, psychological, and educational needs. The basic motivations to access social media are to get information and to communicate with friends and colleagues, to consume time, to share fun jokes with friends, to follow up public affairs, and to follow up academic status.

Academic purposes are among the important motivations of accessing social media. The student use social media to access teaching materials, to contact instructors, to share educational materials. The students also utilize social media to complete their assignments and duties and follow up their academic status. The findings

also indicate that there are some differences in patterns of using social media and motivations obtained refer to gender and academic program of students.

From the above, it is clear that the university students are indeed goal-oriented in their use of social media, using them to gratify their various needs. They use social media to gratify social needs such as communicating with friends and sharing fun jokes with them and knowledge needs such as seeking information and following up public affairs. They also use social media to gratify psychological needs such as consuming time and not to feel lonely; personal needs such as recording special moments and listening to music; and educational needs such as accessing and sharing educational materials, getting new duties, and following up academic status.

Finally, it is important to mention that the limitation of this study is related to its sample. The sample covers only undergraduate students of two universities in the UAE who have similar education levels but belong to slightly different age groups. It is, then, difficult to generalize findings of the study to the regional or the international level. More field studies are needed to examine reasons for the use of social media and gratifications obtained in the Arab countries in relation to personal traits, and social and cultural context.

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Evaluating Third-Person Effects Among Foreigners on China's Social Media: Wechat and Tantan as Case Study

Uchenna Kingsley Anunne, YAN Lifeng
Xiamen University, Fujian, China

The social media have become part of the daily lives of foreigners living in China as they try to cope with social cultural dynamics of their environment. They rely on social media to keep in touch with loved ones, make new friends, and keep in touch with news and information around the world. To many of them, the social media are a necessary tool in managing boredom. However, the use of the social media comes with the challenge of third-person effect (TPE), a hypothesis which holds that individuals believe media have more effects on others than they have on themselves. Using two of the leading social media apps in China, Wechat and Tantan, by using a survey approach, we investigated the manifestation of TPE among foreigners in China who are members of the selected social media communities. Our results confirm TPE among our study group. It also shows that those under the influence of TPE have the potential for social media addiction. We advise that social media users are conscious of TPE in view of its negative effects on their well-being.

Keywords: Wechat networking, media influence, online exposure

Introduction

Social media are a major feature of daily our communication. The use of social media as a means of interaction has received a boost by the entrance into the Internet frame, the Wi-Fi, which ensures Internet connectivity in virtually every space. Today, people use social media not only in their offices but also in such public places, such as parks and gardens, restaurants, and in the bus trains. Social media networks are increasingly permeating society (Dickey & Lewis, 2010). In the contemporary society, this computer-mediated form of communication serves various purposes, ranging from chatting, sharing of information, marketing, advertising, entertainment, political mobilization to academic engagements including distribution of lecture materials lectures and exchange academic information by students.

Different scholars hold different views about the history of the social media, with some of them tracing it to the emergence of email in the last century. However, in the year 2000, social media received a great boost with many social networking sites springing up (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011). According to Edosomwan et al. (2011), this development gave a boost to the transformation of interaction among individuals and organizations who share common interest in such areas as friendship, information, education, and music, with the likes of MySpace and LinkedIn being among the early social media setups. Douai, Auter, Wedlock, and Rudyk (2013) posited that social media have strengthened relationships and

allowed individuals to select and compare news and news sources, in addition to radically influencing the speed at which news can be disseminated, obtained, and controlled. It is estimated that worldwide hundreds of millions of subscribers are connected to different social media platforms, including China's Wechat and Tantan, upon which the study is based.

Social Media Revolution

The 21st century is experiencing a communication explosion, sparked by social media. Social media which are part of the Internet mediated new media have changed the ways of life in several ways. The social media revolution has resulted in vast changes in communication even in the area of how consumers receive and use marketing communications (Williams, Crittenden, Keo, & McCarty, 2012). The different social media tools help people of different ages and backgrounds to interact with one another either as individuals as groups.

Social media have the potential to fundamentally change the character of our social lives, both on interpersonal level and community level. Social media are effective in the management of organizations, playing a key role in the transformation of the way organizations communicate and becoming available tools at the more cost-effective ways compared to traditional approaches, such as email (Baruah, 2012). Their cost-effectiveness makes social media platforms the preferred choice of many students in seeking access to news and other forms of information. Most social media platforms come with various options for news from around the world, create the necessary environment for social interaction and link ups, and provide psychological succor to some of their users. According to Raju, Valsaraj, and Noronha (2015), online social networking is the latest trend in virtual communication. It is inexpensive, free, and easy to use. The sites sometimes provide psychological succor to some young people as they leverage them to freely express their concerns.

Social media have also been deployed by young adolescents to express their political rights, with the role social media played in the Arab Spring still fresh in the mind. According to Keating and Melis (2017), young adults may be more likely than elders to use social media for political engagement, though this depends on their level of interest in any particular political activity. Social media have also revolutionized the manner in which teaching and learning are carried. Educational institutions now rely in those sites to connect to both the current and potential students and even to deliver instructional materials (Abdulahi, Samadi, & Gharlegghi, 2014).

Wechat

Set up by Tencents Holdings Ltd. in 2011, Wechat is the most popular social media network in China. It has an estimated millions of subscribers. As the market leader in the growing social media market in China which also includes Weibo, Tantan, QQ, and Yukou, Wechat has entrenched itself by providing various platforms which are attractive to both the young and the old. It is easy to download and install and is also compatible with virtually every smart phone available in the market. Wechat provides a platform for voice and instant text messaging, real live location sharing, video and voice calls, sharing of moments, and top "news stories" segment mainly for entertainment news stories.

In addition to chatting with each other or as a group, users can also utilize it in receiving and transferring money, payments for purchases even at the grocery, news and information sharing, among others. Wechat has largely benefited from the ban on Western social media, such as YouTube and Facebook in China by filling the gap to quench thirst for news, information, and entertainment through social media among a large number of the more than one billion people in China. Wechat is evolving from a pure message tool into a multi-functional

platform, such as game center and official account payment. Wechat has been introduced into education to improve teaching and learning, such as mobile learning app, blending learning, ideological education, among others (Mao, 2014).

Hollander (2018), in a 6 March 2018 edition *Business Insider* report, said Wechat's monthly average user chat reached one billion subscribers in the last quarter of 2017. The figure represents an astronomical increase in the 195 million recorded four years earlier, 2013 and up by 12% from 889 million subscribers recorded in the third quarter of 2016.

But in spite of its mass following and uses, the global human rights watch Amnesty International (AI) in 2016 ranked Wechat and its sister application, QQ, 11 out of 11 in its overall ranking of Technology Companies on Encryption and Human Rights index. AI says that encryption protects the identity of dissidents worldwide, being a vital tool that allows journalists to communicate with dissidents; and enables NGOs to protect their works and lawyers communicate privately in "repressive" countries. It also ranked the two apps last in its message privacy. Wechat has also come under attack from the Australian government. Grigg (2018), in a report in the 11 March edition of Australia's *Financial Review*, reported that the country's Defence Department has banned its personnel from downloading and using Wechat on their mobile phones. The report says the measure was taken on suspicion that the app contains some spyware.

Similarly, earlier on 2 February 2017 edition of *Indian Express*, in a piece entitled: "Defence Ministry to Indian Armed Forces: Install Chinese Apps Immediately", Dhapola reported a similar ban by the Indian defence authorities as the Australians. Corfield (2018) said Tencents and Wechat owners deny the allegations and others bothering on storing the chat history of their users for onward transfer to Chinese authorities on demand. The author reported the company as saying it does not keep its customers' chat history as chat contents are only stored on user's mobile phone, computer, or other terminal appliance, adding that the company does not analyze the technical content of users' chat mode either.

Tantan

Founded in 2014, although Tantan, a multimedia app does not command same mass appeal as Wechat, they nonetheless share a lot of similarities. Like Wechat, Tantan is used for social networking, chatting, and sharing information and news. Its major strength is its matchmaking platform through which it connects "like minds" through "like" "dislike" swiping of profile photos for social connection and interaction. With Tantan, online friends can chat, exchange voice messages, and hold live video calls. They can also exchange news and information. Like Wechat, friends on Tantan can also post the highlights of their daily lives through the "moment" section.

Literature Review

Linking the new media with TPE, Antonopoulos and Dimoulas ((2016), in their study, found Web TPE at the three perceptual levels of self, friends, and other users. Administering 7,404 questionnaires on users to investigate the role of social media metrics, namely shares and likes of news articles, Antonopoulos and Dimoulas (2016) found a significant correlation between web third-person effect and articles characteristics that influence people's attitudes to share news online. Similarly, Schweisberger, Billinson, and Chock (2014) found TPE among young people who felt that low-relevance stories in the social media would have greater impact on others than on themselves. Their respondents further reported that stories that are of high-relevance will have more impact on themselves than on others. The study involved 88 undergraduate students aged

between 18 and 22 drawn from different racial backgrounds in the US. In a related study on “Me: Versus Them: Third Person Effects Among Facebook Users”, Tsay-Vogel (2016) found that TPE exists among social media users. The study showed that greater Facebook users exhibit greater tendency to report social networking sites as exerting a stronger effect on others than on themselves.

Excessive use of Wechat, social interaction, and locus of control among college students in China was the subject of investigation by Hou et al. (2017) in which they found that like other social media users, adolescent owners of Wechat account are at risk of “problematic use” of social media, such as addiction. Their study further showed that excessive use of the app has negative implications for adolescents’ studies. But Banyai et al. (2017) pointed out that due to different theoretical frameworks and psychometric assessments, the prevalence of problematic social media use might be underestimated or overestimated. The authors in their study on problematic use of social media that results from a large scale nationally representative adolescent sample informed that previous studies had reported different prevalence rates relating to problematic social media use among college students.

Golan and Joon (2016) posited that in some instances, TPE manifests in extremely dangerous circumstances among social media users. In their work on the third-person effect of ISIS recruitment propaganda, online political self-efficacy and social medium activism, they found that due to the manifestation of TPE, some people were vulnerable to being recruited by the ISIS using their strong social media campaign. In their study, which surveyed adults in the US, they found that the respondents were more likely to perceive young people as being susceptible to ISIS recruitment propaganda than the sampled population.

Theoretical Framework

Encapsulated in media effect theories and hypotheses, media and communication scholars have devoted lots of resources exploring how, why, and when media effects. One of those studies centers on TPE. It proposes that media contents have more effects on others than on oneself. To measure TPE, people are usually asked two different kinds of questions with one of the questions focusing on perception of the influence of media on oneself; and the other probing the perception of media influence on others. Scholars say TPE occurs when people respond that others are more influenced by media than they are influenced by same media.

A person exposed to a persuasive communication in the mass media sees this as having a greater effect on others than on himself or herself, says Davison (1983) known widely as the originator of TPE. In his paper titled “Third- Person Effect in Communication” published in the *Opinion Quarterly* Davison based on his argument: Each individual reasons: “I will not be influenced, but they (the third persons) may be persuaded”.

Since Davison’s hypothesis, scholars from various fields in social sciences have explored his proposition from various contexts, including news, commercials, and health messages. They inform that TPE is built on two flanks, the perceptual and behavioral components, with the former focusing on the perceptual self-other discrepancy whereby people tend to perceive persuasive media messages as having greater influences on others than themselves; and behavioral consequences which may result from perception gaps (Myojung, 2018).

TPE literature at its core advances a difference between perceived effects on self and on others (Jeffers, Neuendorf, Bracken, and Atkin, 2008). Since Davison advanced his hypothesis in 1983, Ven-hwei and Ran (2002) explained that most of studies viewed the behavioral component of third person effect from the prism of magnitude perceptual bias, a psychological tendency to lose objectivity in perceptions. Scholars say perceptual bias occurs when people believe they are making valuable and unbiased judgments while, in the real sense, a

number of variables, such as social and cultural persuasions, age, and gender, interact to influence that judgment.

Johansson (2005) linked the third person effect which as stated earlier holds that people are likely to believe that others are more influenced by mass media messages than they themselves are with attitudinal or behavioral outcomes, such as governments taking steps to censor media content. Johansson (2005) posited that the hypothesis has a strong connection with the mass media in general and anti-social messages in particular. More scholars have advanced various reasons for the occurrence of third-person effect. McLeod (2017) argued that third-person effect occurs when we overestimate the effects of media on others and underestimate same for ourselves in an ego-enhancing trip or superiority complex, which he described as paternalism. Similarly, Rojas, Shah, and Faber (1996) attributed TPE to various factors, including a perceived media bias, saying ‘the third-person effect is a result of people on both sides of an issue seeing the media as biased against their own opinion’.

Citing a study by Perloff in 1998 and Lepper’s investigation in 1985 on same subject, Rojas and his team further attributed to media effects, including TPE to what he described as “hostile media phenomenon supported by ego involvement”. Another major factor that likely contributes to TPE, says Cornners (2005), is perception of the media content itself. The author argues that if one is being influenced by mass media as an undesirable event, there is the tendency to perceive oneself as being as not being under the influence of such messages even as he or she thinks others, out of naivety, may not be able to make such a distinction.

Despite what many scholars say evidence-based manifestations of TPE, others such as Salwen and Driscoll (1997) criticized it on the ground that respondents’ opinions were usually interacted with “fruitful” perceptual bias to think that news media, as in a study in the trial of O. J. Simpson where they say trial coverage exerted greater influence on others than on respondents themselves. Similarly, Perloff (1999) argued that it is not be entirely correct to advance that media have more effect on others without first appreciating the circumstances surrounding the media message. Schwarz (1999) questioned not only the framing of the questions that elicit the reported TPE but also sought to know if the respondent’s understanding of the questions actually matches what the researcher had in mind. He also queried if the respondent’s understanding tap the same facet of the issues and the same evaluative dimension as the researcher. Schwarz’s view is also shared by Shen and Huggins (2013) as they argue that arising from the question order, methodological factors could have led to the perceived TPE.

Objective of Study

Decades after Davison espoused his hypothesis, debate bothering on its validity has continued to rage among media and communication scholars. However, not much has been done to examine this hypothesis within the framework of the new communication phenomenon, the social and networking media. In China, foreigners put the social media to a variety of uses, including sharing of news and information, chatting, and keeping in touch with friends and loved ones back home. Many use it to manage boredom. This study aims to investigate how TPE hypothesis applies to these foreigners who are exposed to the Chinese social media. It also aims to investigate any correlation between TPE in the social media and social media addiction. It seeks to answers the following questions: Is the claim to TPE valid? If yes, does it apply to social media and networking app users also? Is there a nexus between TPE and social media addiction? If yes, what are the possible implications of this on the well-being of those social influenced.

Significance of Study

Most of TPE-related studies have concentrated on the traditional media. The emergence of new media has broadened the scope of communication and social interaction, hence the need to expand the media studies to accommodate this new entrant. This study contributes towards filling literature gap between the new media and social networking, on the one hand, and TPE. Discourse on media effect theories will be incomplete without extending it to media. This study serves the purpose of integrating the social media into TPE discourse, a significant step in making the study of the hypothesis more inclusive of both the old and the new media.

The study is also unique because we investigated two different social media platforms unlike similar studies in the past that relied on one medium to draw their conclusion. The two-media approach offered the researchers a broader perspective and the opportunity to reconcile the findings from each medium with each other leading to conclusions. It draws attention to the relationship between TPE on social media and Internet addiction. The study is therefore not just a contribution to media effect literature but an attempt to broaden the discourse towards areas rarely researched upon by media and communication scholars. It also strengthens the TPE discourse.

Research Method and Scope

We used quantitative research method in this study. We expanded our study to cover two of the leading social media and networking sites in China, Wechat and Tantan, and administered two separate questionnaires on their user. Our sample population was foreigners living in China. Wechat and Tantan are very popular among foreigners living in China because of their content and reach. We surveyed 57 confirmed Tantan users and 71 confirmed Wechat users, 128 users in total. We developed and administered two separate questionnaires one for each group.

We matched the responses from the groups against each other. Conscious of the “question pattern” criticism of TPE, we changed the wording of the questionnaires, though the main idea we sought to extract from our respondents remained the same. The idea is to confirm if the wording of the questions has any influence on respondents answer responses. Beyond asking the respondents to merely strongly agree or disagree, we asked them to provide answers to their position. This is meant to ensure that the reasons behind reported TPE or otherwise is derived from the respondents themselves and not based on speculative deductions by the researchers. We analyzed their responses and drew our conclusions.

Data Analysis

Wechat Data

Wechat is one of the most widely used multi-purpose social media platforms in China. Its appeal cuts across all ages, professions, and racial backgrounds. To foreigners, it is a veritable tool for seeking news on its “top through” stories option. They use for sharing information, banking and money transfer transactions as well as chatting. Results show that 56.34% of respondents sampled in this study said they have been using the app for three years and above, while 43-66% said they have been on it for zero to two years on it.

Our results show that 57.75% of our respondents said they visit the app at least once every 10-50 minutes. They are closely followed by those who said they visit the app at least once every 51 minutes to one hour. This group represents 23.94% of our respondents. The third group is made up of respondents who said they visit the

app at least once every two hours to 24 hours; they constitute 12.68% of our respondents; while last group, the remaining 5.63% of the respondents said they check the app at least once every one hour to two hours.

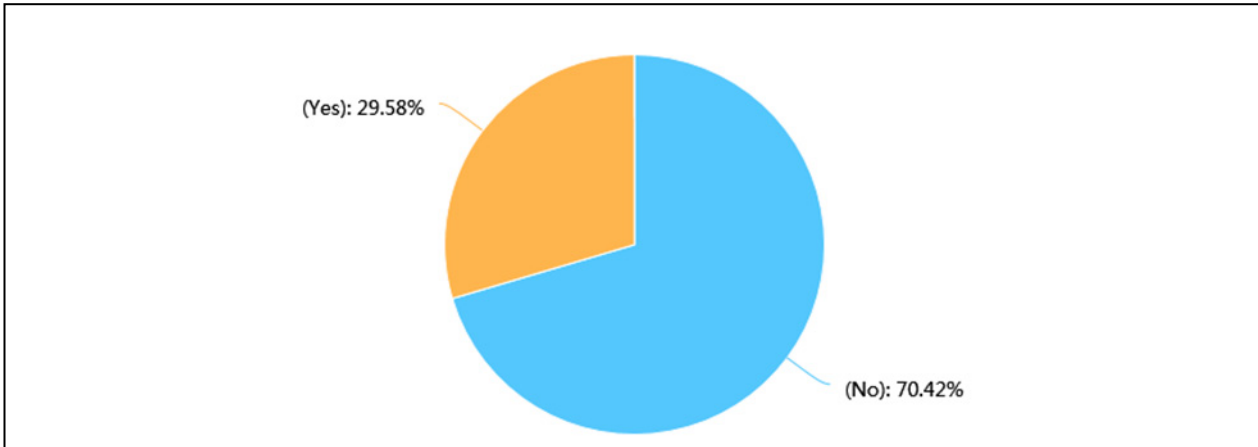


Figure 1. Wechat user’s response to the possibility of being influenced by or addicted to the app.

When asked what they spend most of their time doing on Wechat, 69.01% of the respondents said they chat and share news and information, while 23.94% of them said they watch video clips and carry out money transfers. Similarly, 4.23% said they engage in the other activities not listed in the options, while 2.82% responded that they spend most of time making Wechat calls, sharing, and listening to music.

Table 1

Respondents’ Wechat Use Frequency

Every 10-50 minutes	41	57.75%
Every 51 minutes to 1 hour	17	23.94%
Every 1:01 minutes to 2 hours	4	5.63%
Every 2:01 hours to 24 hours	9	12.68%
Total no. of respondents	71	

On why they cannot be addicted to influenced by Wechat, 52.11% of the respondents said it is because they do not believe everything they read on watch on Wechat, while 52.11% of them said believe others can become addicted because they lack the ability to effectively manage their time on social media hence can be recklessly hooked to it Wechat; even as 47.89% of the respondents said they are very effective in the management of their time on social media hence cannot spend more time than necessary on Wechat to warrant addiction.

Tantan Data

Most of the Tantan-user respondents, 82.46% of them said they used the app for zero to two years, while 17.54% of them have been on the app for three years and above. This is not a surprise because the app has been in existence for only some couples of years.

Our result shows that chatting, sharing, and reading news and information top the list of respondents’ use of the app. Those in that category account for 52.63% of the respondents followed by those who use it for other

purposes, not listed in the options. They constitute 26.32% of the respondents. Those who use the app for watching movies clips, or uploading photos on “moments” as well as commenting on their contacts “moments” represent 15.79% of the respondents while those who use to listen to and share music bring up the rear, reporting 5.26% of the total number of those sampled.

When asked to justify offer reasons for their position on the possibility of why they cannot influenced by or addicted to Tantan, most of the respondents, 66.67% of them said it is because they do not believe in every information they get from the app; while 33.33% ruled out being addicted to the app because they are capable of effectively managing the time they spend on it. When the question was rephrased to indicate that “others can” become addicted to or influenced by information they get from Tantan, 82.46% of the respondents strongly agreed, while 17.54% strongly disagreed.

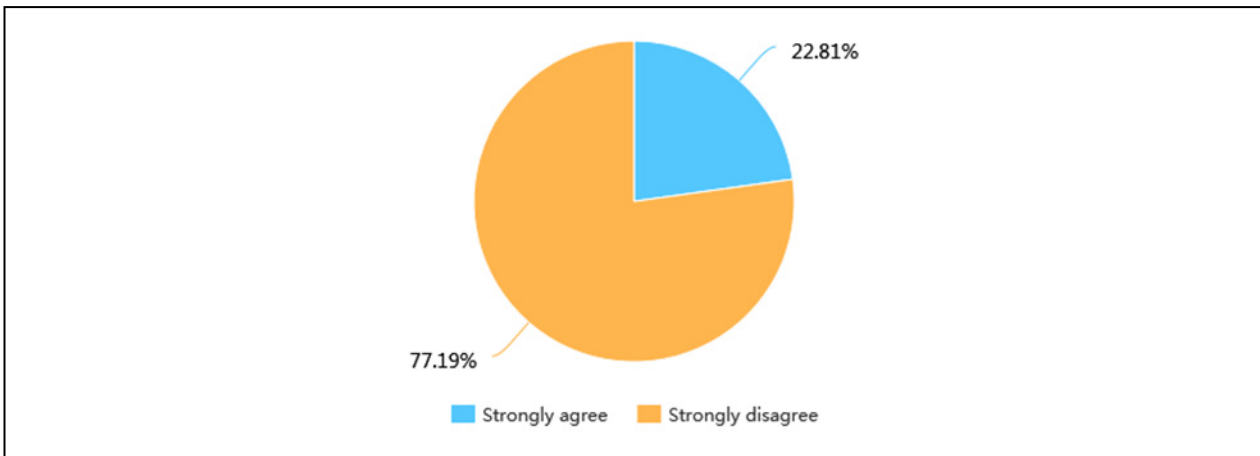


Figure 2. Tantan user’s response to the possibility of being addicted to or influenced by the app.

When the respondents were asked to offer reasons why they think others can be addicted to or influenced by Tantan, 52.63% advanced that other people do not have the ability to effectively manage their time on social media hence they can be reckless with their time usage on Tantan.

Table 2

Tantan Users’ Justification of Others Being Influenced by or Addicted to the App

Options	Sub-total	%
Because others can be reckless with the way the manage their time on Tantan	30	52.63%
Because others tend to believe whatever they read/watch on Tantan	27	47.37%
Total number of respondents	57	

Similarly, 47.37% of the respondents reported that other people tend to believe what they read or watch on Tantan. Interestingly, most of the respondents, 56.14% of them said they are satisfied with Tantan as a social media platform as against 25% who expressed dissatisfaction with the app. Most of the respondents, 85.92% of them also said they are satisfied with facilities available in Wechat while 14.08% said they are not satisfied with the app.

Discussion/Conclusion

One of the TPE criticisms is the questionnaire wording and question order (Price & Tewksbury, 1996). Most approach is to phrase questions about oneself using strongly disagree and strongly agree; then rewording the same question about others (Hayee & Kamal, 2014). The back-to-back-self-then-others question could lead to underestimation of third-person perception conversely, the others-then-self-question order could artificially increase the third-person gap if respondents systematically use others question as baseline for answering the self question, says Dupagne, Salwen, and Bryant (1999). In the Wechat questionnaire, we asked self-others question as against other-self order used for Tantan respondents. While we used the “agree/strongly” answer option for our Tantan respondents, we applied the “yes” and “no” option for our Wechat respondents. Despite the rewordings, question order, and answer options, our findings show that foreigners who use the two social media in China not only reported TPE but also reported symptoms of addiction to the two apps.

Using the “strongly agree” option, we asked the Tantan user respondents to assess the possibility of others other themselves being addicted to or influenced by what they read, watch on, or use the app, 82.46% of the respondents said they strongly agree that others will so affected, while only 17.54% said they strongly disagree. When the same question was posed for Wechat users using the “yes” or “no” option, the result did not change, rather, the feeling of self-preservation becomes higher with 88.73% saying “yes” they believed others would be so affected while 11.27% said “no”, they do not believe so. This result confirms our hypothesis that questionnaire wording and order of questions have no influence on the reporting of TPE.

When the questions were re-worded, replacing “others” with “I” being addicted to or influenced by the Tantan, 77.19% said they strongly disagreed, while 22.81% said they strongly agreed. When same question was posed to Wechat users, 70.42% said “no”, while 29.58% said “yes”. When we asked the respondents to advance reasons for their answers, 66.67% of Tantan users said they cannot be addicted to the use of the app because they are efficient in the management of their time on the social media, while 52.11% of Wechat users said they cannot be influenced by the app because they do not believe every news or information they access there. Interestingly, 52.11% of Wechat respondents said others will be addicted to using the app because “many people can be reckless with the way they manage their time on Wechat”. These results indicate TPE among foreigners who use Wechat and Tantan.

Results from of the two groups reveal a nexus between social media addiction and TPE. While the respondents think that others will be influenced or become addicted to social media, they assume they themselves are immune from such influence. This perhaps explains why majority of the respondents from both sides spend so much time that can safely be said to be within the threshold of addiction on two platforms. As stated earlier, 42.11% of our Tantan respondents said they use their app at least once every 10 to 50 minutes, while 24.56% said they do same in at least every 51 minutes to one hour. Wechat study group users reported even a higher percentage, with 57.75% reporting same frequency of usage while 23.94% reported to do same between every 51 minutes to one hour, an exposure that puts them at the risk of addiction, according to Al-Menayes (2015) who posited that the higher the amount of time spent online the greater the extent of the symptoms of Internet addiction.

Siddiqui and Singh (2016), in a study, drew attention to implications of spending lots of time on social media, warning that one of the negative effects of social media is its ability to make people become addicted to

using it, with people who spend lots of time on the platform reporting diversion of focus and loss of concentration on any particular task. Such people, they say, risk a weakened social life and they exhibit the tendency to compromise established family relationships, for instance, in pursuit of new social partners. Being hooked to social media or wanting to always be online on social media as reported in our study, according to Sahin (2017), are manifestations of social media addiction, a development, he said, should be of concern to social sciences scholars. Singh, Amiri, and Sabbarwal (2017) described the phenomenon as over-utilization of the social media which they said expose the users to mental and physical health challenges, such as mental fatigue, strain, anxiety, and panic syndrome. Findings from this study support the TPE hypothesis. It also reveals the nexus between TPE among social media users and Internet addiction, with potential negative health and social implications for victims.

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Using Social Media in Strategic Management

Suvi Sivén

RGU/LAUREA UAS, Great-Britain, Scotland/Finland

The online public conversations seem like Twitter has begun as a common communication tool by people tweeting their ideas, opinions and taking stands, committing themselves during last 5-10 years. This overall assumption has taken its place as a few of world's remarkable leaders such as Trump, Merkel, and May are using microblog Twitter by pointing out their opinions. This opens question if directors and managers of, e.g., in Higher Education Institutions are using Social Media's tools such as microblog Twitter as a part of their work in strategic management. As Twitter has launched interactive tools and closed groups in recent years, some HEI's (Higher Education Institution) directors started to consider and use Twitter in strategic management interactively with their personnel in Finland. Using Social Media and Twitter allows a possibility for a different model of social dialog between inner and outer stakeholders, e.g., of strategy or strategical management. This requires directors who can foster organisation's values also via Social Media's microblogs such as Twitter. This draws attention to communication management of strategy or strategical management communication. This research studies by theme interviews how directors of selected Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) think that they are using Social Media tools such as Twitter in their daily strategic management. The aim and objective is to have an oversight if there is any need for improvement or change in using Social Media tool such as Twitter in HEI's strategic management according to the theme interviews. The result and conclusion are improvements in using Social Media tools like Twitter in strategic management.

Keywords: Social Media, communication strategic management, Twitter, Facebook

Introduction

Defined target organisations for this research study are Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) called Laurea University of Applied Sciences (UAS) and Seinäjoki University of Applied Sciences. Research study is not aiming to generalisation but to have a light overview of using social media tools in strategic management in selected Finnish HEIs and to adapt next research studies according to the results. Using social media in HEIs operational environment has been under discussion in last 5-10 years. Especially when it concerns marketing and visibility of brand and image when future applicants are comparing universities of applied sciences where to apply. In the same time, board of directors and HEIs directors have become more aware that organisation should also interact more with their stakeholders and be experienced as a modern organisation what follows and acts as expected in time.

Both selected HEIs are recreating/revising their strategies in 2019 for next few years. Discussion behind the scenes has been about involving personnel and other stakeholders transparently and having personnel's

feedback concerning the strategy revising. Laurea UAS has used Twitter in last strategy revising five years ago by asking personnel to tweet about strategy related issues via certain hashtag. Laurea UAS is using social media tools as supportive tools for their actions related strategy, values, actions, deliverables, R&D, and revising strategy. Laurea's directors are telling that they are using social media tools, e.g., Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn actively. Seinäjoki UAS is also using social media tools but it is not underlining its use so much than Laurea. Seinäjoki UAS is expanding its using social media tools. Both HEI's directors think that social media tools, e.g., Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn are important channels for transparent interaction in strategic management with their inner and outer stakeholders. This research study focuses on how directors think they are using social media tools and how it is seen, experienced by personnel.

Literature Review

Moran, Seaman, and Tinti-Kane (2011) have published research of *Teaching, Learning, and Sharing: How Today's Higher Education Faculty Use Social Media*. This research focuses on using social media especially on teaching in USA. According to the research 90% of faculties are using social media in teaching as well as in professional life outside the university already in 2011. Isotalus, Jussila, and Matikainen (2018) point out that 2006 published microblog service Twitter is based on sharing short messages and it is exceptional because it is open and communication is public. It is easy to interact with other Twitter users and interact with unknown person. Isotalus et al. (2018) also state that this might also be one of the reasons why Twitter's use is popular amongst politicians, journalism, and sociological when trying to make an impact. They also use United States President Donald Trump as an example whose tweeting has encouraged e.g. other celebrities to use more Twitter as a tool for communication as it has visible role. Twitter (Isotalus et al., 2018) is a part of larger phenomenon of social media, which consists of active content producers, interaction between users and is cross linked and dispersed. Mass self-communication is one the purest in Twitter even though the group of followers is changing (Isotalus et al., 2018). Rowles and Brown (2017) discuss e.g. online connections and how to curate own stream in business, e.g., making Twitter lists and content aggregators, and who to follow when business environment is concerned and its effect on value chain. Isotalus et al. (2018) state that Twitter is relevant part of the change of companies and organisations communication as expertise and so called leadership's promotion is highlighted. Company or organisation is not marketing in Twitter but takes stand, comment and is present. Twitter is considered a good tool for branding and a part of service communication. Different systems and software have been developed for e.g. identifying different emotions in discussions (Isotalus et al., 2018). As organisations strategies seem to be more and more like living strategies instead of stable ones, Twitter could be one of the useful tools to interact with personnel. This could be useful involving personnel and to listen its voice in organisation's development. Koskela and Sihvonen (2018) discuss about hashtag's (#) functions in Twitter. They point out that research of Twitter has focused on sociological meanings, tweet's contents and sharing. Latest research has focused on Twitter as a tool for collection of material/data and different angles on visibility of individual users. It seems that Twitter itself is not the target of the researches but a tool and a source of data. Twitter's hashtag can be analysed e.g. by three different angles: metadata (how hashtag functions as a tool in metacommunicative description and findings), mode of special language (linguistic twists and their combination), and arena for linguistic creativity (how hashtags are used as linguistic play). Linguistic functions and their sources (Koskela & Sihvonen, 2018) have been referred to Jakobson's linguistic taxonomy in 1968 which consists of six linguistic functions (emotive/mind-set, connotation/relation

with receiver, poetic/mode of message, referential, alphabetic/maintain communication, and metalinguistic/talk of language). These linguistic functions have correspondents for what they are connected (sender, receiver, message, context, contact, and code). Objective and aboutness (abstract, connotation) stage describes level of content also of tweets. Hashtags are functioning as indexes but also as semantic meaning element in communication. Meanings of hashtags changes, e.g., because of retweets' focus in different contexts. Tweets also consist of links to e.g. videos and then the role of tweet changes. Systematic observation enables deeper understanding and compares with different social media platforms/tools. Hashtags enable observation via all social media tools. Hashtags can also give a cross-section of certain topics. Virolainen and Luoma-aho (2018) discuss about hashtag capturing, especially how it influences on organisation's image building and branding by using hashtag negative way in Twitter and other social media tools. As hashtags are usually used by themes, capturing hashtag and using it for negative tweets irrationally leaves it vulnerable and content of hashtag might disappear e.g. by effects of memes and humour (Virolainen & Luoma-aho, 2018). Using Twitter as a communication tool in strategic management and renewing strategy is transparent and enables to raise various perspectives of the strategy by inner and outer stakeholders. This leaves hashtag and organisation's image and brand vulnerable for hashtag capturing which might cause e.g. negative tweets to harm consciously organisation or renewing strategy or director who is using Twitter in strategic management. Virolainen and Luoma-aho (2018) are pointing out that organisations have to be careful how, where, and for which discussions on Twitter they are participating as the mode and role of the discussion can change quickly. They also state that it requires an interesting and diverse content flow. In this context, Virolainen and Luoma-aho (2018) are referring to Lillqvist's research made in 2016, which argues discourse struggle in interactions between organisations and public depending on e.g. manipulation and monologue sound by organisations or protesting public. All this might cause an image crisis for the organisation. Therefore, selective dialog is cheapest way to handle organisations communication in Twitter as well as in other social media tools. Jussila, Boedeker, Helander, and Vuori (2018) discuss about recognising emotional state in Twitter. There are interactional and communicational elements in sharing experience to another person. As transparency in Twitter is an enabler, the prevention for risk of losing value needs plan for quick actions. Jussila et al. (2018) point out that strategic management should base on conscious decisions on understanding of current state of organisation. In this situation, emotional state of stakeholders by analysing information sourced from social media. This allows information's modifying for organisation's purposes in strategic management e.g. by understanding how customers experience company's brand and how they express emotional state in social media. Analysing can be done by software which analysis metadata produced by social media (Jussila et al., 2018). Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson (2013) state that "the structure of the relationships you are embedded within may either promote or restrict your ability to get access to resources". Social network affects on everything on your life and what comes to business life on social capital. People trust their network and on information, what they are having and receiving via their social network on social media's platforms. Network's relations and analysing social networks give an impression for company or organisation where they stand for in their own business environment via social network links. Hakala and Vesa (2013) states that online discussion is natural part of daily life for many persons especially when they want to stand out with their opinion.

Methodology

Comparing and discussing of pros and cons of qualitative and quantitative methods as well as mixed

methods and triangulation were base for selecting data collection method for this research study. The topic, aims, and objectives are if directors of Higher Education Institutions are using Social Media's tools such as microblog Twitter as a part of their work in strategic management. Idea of oriented data collecting focused on interviews but as the research is in the beginning, interviews as a data collecting method were revised and defined theme interviews in this point. This selection happened to have a light overview what selected directors and personnel members think of strategic management in their own operating environment and what they think of using social media tools in strategic management as well as of the interaction in social media when strategic management is concerned. Jensen (2012) states that researcher have to recognise that interview is interactive situation where validity and reliability of statements gathered during the interview are not only representations but issues what interviewee think. Content of the interview connects with context and is affected by interaction between interviewee and interviewer. Gathered data by interviews modified into sources of by analysis as well of meaning through interpretation. In the interview situation researcher should also recognise that researchers do not have perfect insight to interviewed issue in interviewee's context. Language and language skills in operative environment have also strong impact on interview. Theme interviews have been used to this study to have a light overview of directors and personnel opinions how they think they are using social media in strategic management of few Universities of Applied Sciences in Finland. Theme interview is one of the useful methods to collect research data. Even though these interviews made for research survey interviews weren't used because for this research study researcher is gathering data for light overview of the topic. By the results of research study's, theme interview researcher will analyse the wider aspects of the topic and does it which needs revising before further research and collecting data in the field. Hyvärinen (2017) states that interviews handle issues which have happened earlier in different environment and are therefore multidimensional as they here and now as well then and there. He points out that interview is wide interaction and more than asking questions. It is open interaction for sudden actions and surprises. Laaksonen and Matikainen (2013) discuss about interaction and online discussions and point out e.g. Hine's (2000) taxonomy of synchronous and asynchronous services and communication involved. They are pointing out of change in platform based culture and technology using Twitter's retweeting as an example. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) point out that research interview is about interaction between interviewer and interviewee. It has professional nature of discussion where a structure and purpose found. In this discussion interviewer controls the logic of the discussion and defines the topic of the interview. It is important to avoid any leading words or question structure to have objective research data by interviewing. This has to consider also when analysing the collected data. Kananen (2012) states that when researcher wants to understand topic better he is using theme interview as in theme interview researcher is sneaking the core of the topic and trying to reveal the truth of the researched topic. In the situation, the researched phenomenon relates to interviewee. Theme interview proceeds from theme to theme from universal to more focused one. During the process interviewer makes clarifying questions of each theme. Hirsjärvi, Remes, and Sajavaara (2016) state that theme interview is defined between structured and unstructured interview as it has themes but questions are not specific and known beforehand or in a certain order. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2014) state that interview as a research data collection method is flexible and appropriate for many different premises and purposes. They apply that theme interview logic proceeds by certain themes instead of particular question. This allows interviewee to give certain meanings of formulation by interaction during the interview (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2014; Kananen, 2012). Seven theme interviews have done between January and March 2019 for this research study.

Themes of the interviews:

- Strategic management in own business environment?
- Strategic management and social media?
 - Ideas of combining these two?
 - How to use/exploit?
 - Applicable tools of social media?
 - Positive?
 - Negative?
- Communication interaction between directors and staff in social media as part of strategic management?

After thematizing, designing, interviewing, and transcribing theme interviews, there are still three stages as analysing, verifying, and reporting left according to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009). Analysing of interviews is slow process and demands patience as the researcher categorises data according to the research questions and topics (Pietilä, 2010). Analysis starts typically by asking what questions by which researcher familiarises himself with collected data and starts to categorise it. Pietilä (2010) states that it is important to examine and discuss what is not said during interviews.

Davies and Hughes (2014) have listed interviewed data for six classes:

- (1) facts about the “here and now”;
- (2) what the interviewee knows;
- (3) facts about past events;
- (4) feelings;
- (5) attitudes or opinions;
- (6) beliefs.

Data of this research study approach’s theme interviews which have the context of interviewee’s attitudes or opinions and beliefs as well as interviewee’s facts about “here and now” plus what the interviewee knows. Ruusuvoori (2010) points out interaction and authority of interviewer who e.g. mumbles during the interview and doing it proceeds the interviewing to the right direction. This arises the question of ethics and validity of collected data. Ruusuvoori (2010) states that interviewee and interviewer build up an institutional situation where participants have taken roles from the start until the end of interview. She also points out that in discussion analysis researcher focuses his attention to interaction between the parties, regularity and approaches the data by emic angle and meaningful aspects. Gadamer (2004) states that language is record of finitude as language is developing continuously and expresses experiences of humans. This is linked with interaction and discussion in social media texts e.g. in Twitter. Virtanen, Rahtu, and Shore (2018) discuss that human has a need to have a written interaction in almost all areas of life and this has led to new technical tools and for multitudinous interventions for interaction. Even though asynchronous text is not the best choice for researching real interaction between humans but it is possible to research to whom the text is intent and what kind of script there is behind for interaction between writer and reader. Poynter (2010) states importance of ethics when making research in blogs or in microblogs e.g. Twitter. He points out that researcher’s involvements have to be clear for participants of online discussion, blog, or microblog and it has to be clear and verifies that researcher might use text of the online discussion, blog, or microblog for project’s or research purposes. Participant’s anonymity must secure.

Data Analysis

Ministry of Education in Finland outlines financial restrictions and budgeting lines for HEIs in Finland. This outlines part of HEI's strategy and strategical actions and deliverables even though HEIs have their own values, vision, and mission which are related e.g. to their operational environment, aims, and objectives set by owners. HEI's strategy which is capsulized is essential base for all e.g. director's actions. Strategic management in operational environment has been changing in last five years according to HEI's directors. It seems to be more agile and adapted direction. Strategy and strategic management implementation is made by concrete actions. Opinion seems to be by answers that it is important to make strategic management by involving and participating personnel in daily basis what has direct link with organisations vision, mission, values, and strategy. Excluding issues and actions what are not important by director's own view on organisation's strategy and strategic management is one main element of strategic management. Implementing strategy and strategical management are daily actions and it is actively involved in operational environment. Strategic management and effectiveness is concrete in daily actions and it is middle management's work to ensure that it happens. Middle management has tools for implementing strategic management and directors e.g. in personnel's developing days. One of the results by interviewing HEI's directors was that these HEIs do not have particular instructions for directors who of them should use or how social media tools in strategic management. Using social media tools seems to be voluntary in social media tools where each director is active and feels comfortable to share results of the organisation or other strategical value related issues. Directors think that social media is a good channel for interaction with inner and outer stakeholders. In discussion which social media tools are used and how, it was difficult to determine good accurate tools by which to reach or involve certain stakeholders.

Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn are experienced more professional and useful channels to have connect especially to outer stakeholders than the other social media tools but if future customers/students are concerned there is no clear option for best social media tool. There were doubts if future students are reached by Facebook as there has been discussion of decreasing number of young people in Facebook. Twitter and Facebook seem to be useful when it comes to inner stakeholders and personnel. These tools could be used e.g. in creating, drawing, and implementing strategy but in measuring and effectiveness. Tweet of values and ideas for strategy and then attach those in future strategy. Interviewed directors thought that using social media tools in strategic management is good as in this position organisation's strategy and values are transparent and set them for stakeholder's discussion openly. Via social media tools such as Twitter, HEI/organisation can transparently tell about its actions and impacts on its operative environment what can effect on image and brand. Social media as a place for open discussion might encourage discussion between organisation's stakeholders and organisation even about innovations. Directors are e.g. tweeting of events and actions. These are organisations strategy related issues. Directors are popping out comments and questions to encourage personnel to join in discussion. Data of interviews pointed out thinking of director's position as a systematic representative of organisation in social media. This outlined thoughts how to modify linguistically messages in social media, how often directors should post of organisation's actions, values, or other strategy related issues, how actions in social media affects on organisation's image and brand. Data of selected HEI's theme interviews tell that HEIs do not have official code of conduct for social media which would be as an instruction for directors how to act and what to do in social media. HEI's directors think that this might be because that there have not been yet such a big issue

related in HEIs in discussion in social media. HEI's directors can choose where to post, when to post, what to post, and how to use social media in strategic management. Crisis management and marketing in social media has some instructions but it has not been shared openly for organisation's personnel or it does not have any clear connections for strategic management or other issue which can be posted. One of selected HEIs has implemented "messenger-program". Directors were the first messengers then the idea widened to a selected group of people who started to post and follow social media time to time. These messengers can choose and are using social media tools which they find comfortable to associate. This action has started during last year and is still developing and proceeding step by step in this HEI. Interaction between directors and personnel in social media is important. Social media tools are a good place for sharing e.g. strategy related information where both sides can comment and point out their opinions. Sharing information is not enough. Interaction and open discussions have to be involved. Directors think that social media tools like Twitter and LinkedIn offer a possibility to place questions and comments on ongoing actions in organisation. Interviewed directors assume that personnel acts in the same way another way round and has an active position to post of their own actions in work/operating environment for which directors can comment positively. Directors think that e.g. work-shops in Twitter are useful. They are easy and good to implement as it allows a possibility to gather collected data quickly for rational and useful mode. They also think that it is easy to comment and post interactively once and a while when pausing other work tasks or few hours in a week can take place for taking care of social media aspects related e.g. in strategic management. Personnel and students are seen essential resource e.g. in recreating new strategy. Values and ideas processed in social media involving personnel for from mind—map ideation until processing topics is important. This is because persons involved experience that they can share their thoughts. It is directors task to evaluate which ideas and issues of strategy and strategic management are presented and represented for personnel in selected e.g. Twitter and LinkedIn for processing strategy further. The challenge is content analysis of relevant and irrelevant ideas, comments, posts etc. all the time during the process. Another challenge is filtering negative, irrelevant comments. Drawing all strategical management and creating or recreating strategy with social media messenger ensure dialog between personnel and directors. Customised actions and rendezvous are supportive for strategic management and this has both positive and negative sides as to proceed in social media. Director's task is to think beforehand carefully how to filter all ideas and comments related in strategic management and strategy. At the same time it is said that social media is not official channel for strategic management or communication. The challenge is that all the personnel of e.g. selected are not registered in social media tools and even if some of them are what is the percentage of the personnel who are registered and who are active members and posting/tweeting of events, actions etc. of their organisation. Other of the selected HEIs has circa 550 persons working but only 75 of them registered in Twitter. Registering to a social media tool user is a personal choice. Employer cannot demand employee to use certain social media tools for sharing events or actions of their operational environment. Example of this is one of the interviewed personnel members who have not registered in any social media tool. She think that she can use her time effectively and better to other work related issues than hanging around in social media which does not give any content to her life. She has decided to focus on face-to-face rendezvous. She tells that sometimes she hears some rumours or information from colleagues which is not shared e.g. in intranet or face-to-face rendezvous and is trying to figure out more detailed information e.g. from middle management. Researcher did not receive unambiguous answer or result from theme interviews if directors are sharing exact same information via social media tools and on face-to-face rendezvous. Those personnel members who are not

involved or active members of social media tools e.g. Twitter can miss out of some important information shared by directors in social media tools. When organisation is using e.g. Twitter in strategic management and involving its personnel, the question is, that even though Twitter is transparent tool and following of discussions and commenting is easy it is the overall image false. Is it only in few active member's hands to give an image for directors that e.g. whole personnel's opinions of organisation's strategy is the one what is mentioned in Twitter? Interviewed personnel of the HEIs thought that social media e.g. Twitter, Facebook, and blogs are useful channels for directors to share their thoughts of organisation's strategy. Personnel members though e.g. that it is important that directors or organisation are active in social media when it concerns future students and it gives an aspect to younger generations' life and organisation can also learn from those active social media users who are commenting or following HEIs pages. Personnel members think that HEIs should follow time actively and anticipate needs of future students being involved in recent social media tools. Twitter seems to be experienced one of the most important social media tools, which should be used by organisation's directors. Issues and data what are not related with organisation's strategy should not be shared in social media. Interviewed personnel did not experience strategic management in operational environment or via social media tools done. Because of this the question is what HEIs should do with it and how it is related to personnel's work as strategy is given by board of directors etc. to personnel and personnel do not have possibilities to influence on strategical issues. Personnel think that strategy should be more concrete and personnel would realise what it is properly. Part of the interviewed personnel think that there should be a good proper digital strategy instead of organisation's directors only sharing and work-shopping via social media tools.

Conclusion

Ministry of Education defines part of Finnish HEIs strategy, strategical actions, and deliverables. This is combined by HEI's own views of its strategy by its aims and objectives in its operational environment. Nowadays operational environment includes also social media tools. HEIs are deciding which social media tools they are using and via which their directors are making e.g. capsulized strategic management. Interviewed HEI's directors experience that strategic management in operational environment have to be agile and strategy should be modified as a living strategy. Directors think that they are making concrete actions in implementing strategy and in strategic management. Excluding things and issues when sharing strategy related e.g. events and implications is relevant by interviewed directors as well as by interviewed organisation's personnel members. Code of conduct or instructions could be considered e.g. for strategical management to implementation for HEI's directors and personnel to prevent possible challenges when using social media tools for work. HEI's directors think that social media is a good channel for interaction with inner and outer stakeholders but they should consider carefully how to inform of the same issues to those personnel members or stakeholders who are not involved with e.g. Twitter and do not experience being unequal position when compared with active social media users. Transparency of social media tools experienced to be good when it concerns HEI's strategy and strategic management because it allows possibility to open them as well as organisation's image and brand for transparent discussion. This is related interaction what is experienced very important issue when discussing of strategy and strategic management. This research study indicates for other research studies in near future by concentrating e.g. selected Finnish HEI's directors and personnel experiences of using social media tools e.g. Twitter in strategic management by more detailed questionnaire. Other research study would concentrate on systematic use of Twitter in strategic management by HEI's directors.

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Public Relations and Image Management Strategies of Nigeria Security & Civil Defence Corps After the Infamous “Oga at the Top” Incident

Reginald Koko

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria

Nnamdi Tobechukwu Ekeanyanwu

University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

Ibituru I. Pepple

International Institute of Journalism, Abuja, Nigeria

This paper evaluates the place of public relations in the image management strategies of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) particularly after the infamous “Oga at the Top” interview by the Lagos State Commandant of the Corps. The paper uses questionnaire and the interview schedule as instruments to gather data from members of the public who are familiar with the “Oga at the Top” incident and the public relations officers (PROs) of the NSCDC respectively. From the data gathered, we conclude that the NSCDC adopted different image management strategies to salvage the corporate image of the Corps; that the image management strategies have engendered a cordial relationship between the media and the Corps; and that the infamous “Oga at the Top” incident brought some fame to the Corps as free advertisement as well as questioned the capacity of its officials to discharge their duties effectively. As a fallout of this evaluation, it is recommended that NSCDC management should endeavour to engage only professionals in the field of public relations who would understand and implement public relations objectives and functions in the organisation and that all ranking officers of the NSCDC should endeavour to involve the public relations unit in all their engagement with the external publics to avoid a repeat of the “Oga at the Top” incident that affected the Corps’ image negatively.

Keywords: image management strategies, “Oga at the Top”, publics, corporate image, NSCDC, public relations

Introduction

The image management strategies of an organisation can help to make or mar the organisation’s corporate image. Organisations that relate well with their publics tend to have positive corporate image while those that do not relate well with their publics tend to be perceived negatively. How organisations are perceived by their

Reginald Koko, HND, PGD, M.A.; Department of English and Mass Communication, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rivers State, Nigeria.

Nnamdi Tobechukwu Ekeanyanwu, Ph.D., Professor of International and Strategic Communications, Department of Communication Arts, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.

Ibituru I. Pepple, Ph.D., Lecturer, Department of Journalism, International Institute of Journalism, Abuja, Nigeria.

publics therefore helps to determine the degree to which publics cooperate, support, and patronise such organisations. Therefore, it is pertinent for organisations to design and implement image management programmes in ways that impress their target publics.

Public relations herein after referred to as PR, since its inception has been a much talked about discipline, but not necessarily for right reasons. Everyone uses PR, but criticizes others for using it to gain undeserving mileage (Jethwaney & Sarkar, 2009, p. 1). The importance of public relations to organisations and in different human endeavours cannot be overemphasized, hence its use across many organisations is a critical component of the organisation-publics linkage.

Many scholars and authors have different perspectives to the meaning of public relations. In any case, there is no universally accepted definition of public relations because it is and does mean many different things to different professionals in the discipline. However, we shall consider public relations here as a management function that focuses on the relationship and communications that individuals and organisations have with other groups (called publics) for the purpose of creating mutual understanding and goodwill between that organisation and its identified publics.

According to Kotler and Amstrong (2008, p. 441),

Public relations entails the building of good relations with the companies or organisation public, by obtaining favourable publicity, building a corporate image, and handling unfavourable rumours, stories or events. Public relations as the name implies, is used to promote mutual relationship among people, place, ideas, goods, services, nations, activities, and even organisations and their publics.

As humans, we interact with the society, hence we use public relations to build and maintain our status. Organisations have always used PR strategies to rebuild interest in declining image, commodities, and service. Harlow (1976) as cited in Uka (2008, p. 4) stipulated that:

Public relations is the distinctive management function which maintains mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organisation and its public, involves in the management of problems or issue, help management to keep informed and responsive to public opinion defines and, emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest, helps management keep abreast at and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends and uses research and sound and ethical communication as its principle tools.

The public of an organisation is an individual group or another organisation that has a relationship with the organisation. The publics could also be referred to as stakeholders, and are characterised by their capacity and tendency to impact upon the organisation and vice versa (Lawrence, 2014, p. 1 cited in Koko, 2017). The success of every organisation is largely dependent on the public perception of such organisation, and as such to aim at a good public perception from both internal and external publics will boost the image of that organisation. The way an organisation is being perceived by its various public may be positive or negative. Thus, organisation or government agencies are expected to strive to be portrayed positively because the positive image of every organisation or agency provides for patronage and positive media reportage which in turn gives positive perception to the agency involved.

Image management of an organisation is inevitable because the image of any organisation depends solely on public perception of that organisation. Image is a mental picture of the thought of how something looks or might look. Therefore, the image of an organisation may be an assumption depending on the perception of individuals or the organisations involved. Thus, every organisation has a primary role of monitoring public

perception of its image, and management of that image through good Public relations strategies. Good image management strategy can also serve as a panacea for negative media reports and negative public perception. Image management of any organisation should be solely aimed at gaining positive perception for the organisation; the implication may be that, by so doing, the organisation may gain good image and patronage from its publics.

Public relations are a management function that has its goal to persuade and inform various publics on behalf of a client. This often seeks to change a negative image into a natural or positive image of the organisation. Thus, the management functions of PR should be the priority of every image maker of an organisation, so as to be able to advice management on policies that will build positive image for that agency or organisation.

When the practice of PR is ineffective in an organisation, the organisation loses credibility in the eyes of its publics. Thus, the effective implementation and application of a good public relations strategy in Nigeria Security and Civil Defence may enhance the corporate image management and positive public perception of the Corps.

NSCDC in Retrospect

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) was prior to year 2003 a voluntary organisation. The Corps was established in 1967 as Lagos Civil Defence Committee mainly for the purpose of guiding and informing the residents of Lagos and its environs on how to react and behave during the Civil War. Ade (2006, p. 4) stated that “Civil Defence is a joint act of protection of life and properties in peace time and to carry out rescue, relief and rehabilitation duties before, during and after war or in other emergencies, like man-made disaster in any environment”.

The Act No.2 establishing the Corps as full fledge paramilitary outfit of government was signed into law by the Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the then president and commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on June 2003 and since then, the NSCDC has been saddled with enormous security responsibilities which include but not limited to the following:

(1) Assist in the maintenance of peace and order and also in protection and rescue of the civil populace during the period of emergency.

(2) Recommend to the minister, the registration of private guard companies and keep a register for that purpose.

(3) Maintain a 24-hour surveillance over infrastructure, site, and projects of government at all levels.

(4) Institute legal proceedings against anybody in the name of the Attorney-General of the Federation. In accordance with the provision of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, against any person who is reasonably suspected to have committed an offence under the Act or is involved in any:

- Criminal activity;
- Terrorism;
- Chemical poisoning and oil pipeline vandalism, oil spillage, and nuclear waste poisoning;
- Industrial espionage or fraud, riot, civil disorder, strike or religious unrest, or activities aimed at frustrating any government policy or programme, and evacuating civilian population during period of emergency.

The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (Amended) Act 2007, ACT No.6, further increased the responsibility of the NSCDC to include the following as amended. The Corps shall:

- Recommend to the minister the registration of private guard companies;
- From time to time, inspect the premises of private guard companies, their training facilities and approve same if it is up to standard;
- Supervise and monitor the activities of all private guard companies and keep a register for that purpose;
- Periodically organize workshop and training courses for private guard companies;
- Seal up any private guard company which operates without a valid license.

(5A) Enter and search any premises and seize any material suspected to have been used in the vandalization of suspected proceeds;

(5B) Enter and search premises of any suspected illegal dealer in petroleum product or material. These are some of the areas amended in the 2007 Civil Defence Act.

Statement of the Problem

In 1992, the Federal Government of Nigeria rationalised the departments in its ministries. Each ministry was to have eight departments, one of which was public relations (Akpan, 2011, p. 8). As federal policies in Nigeria are usually applicable in the ministries and departments, agencies such as the NSCDC are supposed to maintain their public relations units with objectives, vision, and mission in order to portray good image and positive public perception of the organisation.

Given about two decades of maintenance of public relations department in Nigeria, it would be expected that this department would have built a positive image for its agency and thus, facilitate a good relationship between the Corps, the media, and their various publics, but researches by Agim (2004, p. 6) show that the government of Nigeria and its agencies are negatively portrayed by the media. Second, the regimented nature of the NSCDC that has made image management issues seems to be treated as secondary, and by so doing, the implication may be that the management is always reactive instead of being proactive in management of its corporate image.

This study was inspired by the unfortunate incident that took place at the Lagos State Command of the NSCDC, where the State Commandant, Mr. Shem Obafaiye, in an interview with the *Channels Television* morning programme *Sunrise Daily* on the 2nd of April 2013, was unable to say the website of the organisation, but rather said he did not want to say one thing, while his “Oga at the top” says another. That statement “Oga at the Top” became the news of the day for weeks and both comedians and musicians took advantage of it. The utterance by the commandant ridiculed the organisations corporate image and gave negative public perception of the NSCDC. Now, the slogan “My Oga at the Top” is commonly used by the public to address officials of the Corps. It is not certain whether the corporate image of NSCDC is still negatively affected by the “Oga at the Top” incident.

It is worrisome that in spite of the existence of a public relations unit, with a public relations officer (PRO), the Corps has continued to experience negative media coverage which is worsening its corporate image. Thus, to what extent do public relations influence the image management strategies of NSCDC and how does this affect the Corps’ corporate image?

Objectives of the Study

This paper generally aims to evaluate the place of public relations in the image management strategies of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) particularly after the infamous “Oga at the Top”

interview by the Lagos State Commandant of the Corps. The specific objectives of the paper include, to:

- (1) find out the image management strategies adopted by NSCDC after the infamous “Oga at the Top” incident;
- (2) find out the extent to which NSCDC utilise public relations in its corporate image management of the Corps.

Research Questions

This study seeks to find answers to the following questions:

- (1) What are the image management strategies adopted by the NSCDC after the infamous “Oga at the Top” incident?
- (2) To what extent does the NSCDC utilise public relations in its corporate image management of the Corps?

Research Hypotheses

Two hypotheses were tested in this paper thus:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between the image management strategies of the NSCDC and the corporate image of the Corps;

H₂: Corporate image of the NSCDC is positively affected by the public relations practice of the Corps.

Review of Concepts

Public Relations

It is not easy to formulate a universally acceptable definition of public relations. This is because of the ubiquitous nature of the discipline, which has made it an object of many interpretations and meanings (Akpan, 2011). However, in order to understand what public relations are and do, a few definitions will suffice. Cutlip, Center, and Broom (1985, p. 3) defined public relations as “The management function which evaluates public attitude, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or organisation with the public interest, and plans and executes programmes of action to earn public understanding and acceptance”.

Cutlip et al. (1985), after the review of numerous definitions of public relations, came out with a common notion and ideal public relations functions that help them to frame their conceptual definition of public relations. The common notion conveyed in the various definitions is that public relations:

Is a planned and sustained programme conducted by an organisation’s management that deals with the relationship between the organisation and its various constituent publics. And also monitors awareness, opinions, attitude and behaviours inside and outside the organisation, analyse the impact of organisation policies, procedures and actions on various publics. Public relations also helps to adjust those policies, procedures and actions found to be in conflict with the public interest and organisations survival, counsels management on the establishment of new policies, procedures and actions that will be mutually beneficial to the organisation and its publics, establish and maintain two-way communication between the organisation and its various publics, and also to produce specific changes in awareness, opinions, attitudes, and behaviours inside and outside the organisation. Finally, to maintain relationship between an organisation and its public. (Cutlip et al., 1985, p. 4)

Based on this notion of public relations, Cutlip et al. (1985, p. 4) defined public relations as the “management function that identifies, establishes, and maintain mutually beneficial relationship between an organisation and the various publics”. Hassan (2013, p. 513) stated that “Public relations is the business,

organisational philanthropic, or social function of managing communication between an organisation and its audience". He further argued that public relations are a separate career option that came into existence when lots of private or government companies and institutions felt the need to market their products, service, and facilities. Public relations are important to all organisation and prominent personalities.

Hassan (2013, p. 513) also described that public relations as the art and science of managing communication between an organisation and its key constituents to build, manage, and sustain its positive reputation. George (2006, p. 366) defined "public relations as the art and science of establishing and promoting a favourable relationship with the public". Public relations are a planned process to influence public opinion, through sound character and proper performance, based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication (Sietel, 2011, p. 36). He further states that "Around the world, the practice of public relations has grown enormously. The international public relations Associations boasted a strong membership, and the practice flourished from Latin America to Africa to Europe to Russia to China" (p. 37). In 1988, the public relations Society of America formally adopted the following definition of public relations that public relations help organisations and its publics adapt mutually to each other. From the above definitions, public relations are about establishing and maintaining goodwill, and mutually beneficial relationship through effective communication among individual, organisation, and its various publics.

Image Management

Image management is an ongoing, proactive process of evaluating and controlling the impact of the organisation appearance on its staff, their various publics, and the achievement of the organisational goals (Rasband, 2012, p. 3). An organisation may see itself as doing well in its roles and attitude towards its publics but the publics may see it as not friendly, non-responsive, uncooperative, etc. (Akpan, 2011, p. 1). Rasband (2012) further stressed that as an individual living and working in a highly complex competitive society, you must recognise and understand the impact of your image as it communicates to you and then others. Organisations must sustain an effective image with their stakeholders in order to maximise their chances for success (Joseph, 2003, p. 3).

Organisational image management is therefore a dialogic process in which organisations and stakeholders communicate with one another to co-create the image of the organisation. An organisation image is the "shared meaning attitude, knowledge, and opinions" of organisational stakeholders, influenced at least in part, by strategic communication emanating from the organisation (Moffitt, 1994, p. 166). Moffitt's work provides support for the argument that image management is a dialogic process, indeed she argues that sometimes organisations have little influence over the image held by stakeholders. Ginzler, Kramer, and Sutton (1993, p. 248) further clarified the dialogic process of organisational image management thus:

An organisation image represents a collaborative social construction between organisation's top management and the multiple actors who comprise the organisational audiences. A particular interpretation of an organisations image may be proposed by top management. But the interpretation must in turn be endorsed, or at the very least not rejected, by their various audiences if it is to persist.

Organisational image does not just appear; rather, they are strategically thought-out and planned for by organisations. Likewise, the development of organisations images is an ongoing process that includes communication with organisational stakeholders (Joseph, 2003, p. 7). Joseph further argues that organisational images are therefore created and sustained by both organisations and stakeholders; while the organisation is

actively attempting to project a particular image of itself (i.e., identity), stakeholders are forming perceptions of the organisation. According to organisational image management theory, an organisation's image is built upon the perception that the stakeholders have about the organisation (Gioia & Thomas, 1996).

The NSCDC is confronted with various image challenges, ranging from poor recruitment process, allegations of corruption during promotion, poor investigation of cases before sending them to court, illegal detention of suspected offenders, to poor auction process of trucks which were exhibits in court. These image problems have been attributed to the weight of bad publicity, negative public perception, and erroneous impression created by the few officials of the agency that engage us such unwholesome practices. This situation is corroborated by the public relations officer of the Corps.

Corporate Image Management of an Organisation

Public relations and image management scholars including Formbrun (1996), Villanova, Zinkhan and Hyman (2000), Bromley (2003), Rayner (2003), and Adeniji and Osibanjo (2012) are of the view that organisations are understandably concerned with managing their corporate image. Accordingly, there is a strong positive correlation between how people perceive an organisation and the pro-corporate supportive behaviour. Corporate images are perceived as the mental pictures of an organisation. It is the sum total of these perceived characteristics of the corporation that we refer to as the corporate image. Every organisation has its image whether the organisation does anything about it or not. Corporate image is formed based on the stakeholders' perceptions of specific company actions as well as associated industry and nation issues.

Formbrun (1996) defined corporate image as the overall estimation in which a company is held by its constituents through perceptual representation of an organisation's past actions and future prospects when compared with other leading rivals. According to Rayner (2003), corporate image confers clear-cut advantages and privileges on companies. It proves difficult to imitate, at the same time, it creates responsibilities. Whereas, the obligations that managers and the organisation owe must meet the personal standards of the employees, the quality standards of customers, the ethical standards of the community, and the profitability standards of the investors. Therefore, organisations sustain their corporate image by building strong and supportive relationships with all of their constituents, i.e., customers, suppliers, investors, community, government, etc. (Formbrun, 1996).

According to Bromley (2003), corporate image is the summary of the impressions or perceptions held by its external stakeholders. Similarly, Villanova et al. (2000) noted that corporate image is an overall perception of the company held by different segments of the public. Corporate image includes information and inferences about the company as an employee, employer, customer, community, supplier, and corporate citizen.

Adeniji and Osibanjo (2012) emphasised that since an organisation's corporate image affects stakeholders' behaviour, they strive to develop and manage their image for many reasons among which are; promoting favourable relationship with the community in the environment they operate, else it may experience difficulty in recruitment, selection, and maintaining the employee morale; influencing investors and financial institutions, and partnerships; establishing a corporate goodwill for the organisation; creating good identity for the employees thereby leading to their satisfaction; and promoting good relationship with the government, opinion leaders, and various interest groups. Hsieh and Kai (2008) referred to good corporate image as a major promotional tool which refers to building good relationships with the company's public by obtaining favourable publicity and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories, and events.

In comparison to organisational reputation, organisational image is a much less stable concept and therefore much more amenable to change. Some argue that organisational image is therefore so ephemeral that to consider it at all is a waste of time, and to consider its management is foolish at best. Scott Cutlip, professor and author of public relations research and teaching materials, has been quoted as saying, "I loathe the word image" (Gottsi & Wilson, 2001. p. 27 cited in Koko, 2017). The researcher argues, however, that the concept of organisational image is very important to public relations researchers and practitioners. An organisational image is the "shared meanings, attitudes, knowledge, and opinions" of organisational stakeholders, influenced, at least in part, by strategic communication emanating from the organisation" (Moflitt, 1994, p. 166). An image is "something projected" by the organisation, and "something perceived or interpreted by others". Organisational image is therefore created and sustained by both the organisation and its various stakeholders; while the organisation is actively attempting to project a particular image of itself, stakeholders are forming perceptions of the organisation. Every organisation strives to be perceived in a good light, because public perception of an organisation determines the level of patronage and success of the organisation.

Theoretical Framework

The importance of a good theory or combination of theories in any research cannot be overemphasised. Theory and research are inseparable (Osuala, 2001, p. 5). A good theory is the most practical useful tool at the disposal of the researcher as such, theoretical framework establishes a vantage point, a perspective, a set of lenses through which the researcher views the problem. As indicated early, the management of organisational image is inevitable to the growth and development of such organisation. This study, therefore, is guided by the Organisational Image Management Theory and Image Repair Theory.

Organisational Image Management Theory

The theory of Organisational Image Management argues that the primary goal of public relations is the creation and maintenance of an organisations' image. Organisations communicate strategically with stakeholders to encourage desirable image and discourage undesirable ones. Organisational Image Management Theory is developed from theories of image management and self-presentation of the level of the individual (Gottman, 1959). Although organisations are different from individuals in important ways, organisations can be, and are treated in the way as individuals by many theorists and practitioners.

According to Organisational Image Management Theory, an organisation's image is the perception that the stakeholders have about the organisation, so it is aligned most closely with the "communicated image" (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). This is an important distinction that suggests that dialogue is necessary for the creation of an organisational image; specifically, an organisational image is developed dialectically by the organisation and its stakeholder's overtime.

Organisations must sustain an effective image with their stakeholders in order to maximise their chances for success (Garbett, 1998). Although failure is not inevitable when an organisation's image is tarnished, it is more likely, as many studies have demonstrated (Baum & Oliver, 1992; Brinson & Benoit, 1999; Dacin, 1997; All references cited in Koko, 2017). What is effective, however, is constantly influx changes in the organisation's environment, and changes in the organisation itself make image management challenging. The concern of both organisation and stakeholders are affected by a host of variables, including market dynamics, technology, and contemporary social and political issues, among others. The challenge for organisations lies in being able to understand these changes and continually adjust the organisation's image in anticipation of and

response to environmental changes. Furthermore, the multiplicity of organisational stakeholders demands a strategic approach to image management in which the organisation attempts to present itself in terms relevant to all stakeholders, both internal and external (Garbett, 1998).

Although challenging, organisations must engage in image management in order to be successful. Organisations image management is important for at least two reasons. First, image determines responses toward the organisation. Second, shared images make possible the independent relationships that exist between organisations and stakeholders (Treadwell & Harrison, 1995, as cited in Joseph, 2003). Although each person's perception of an organisation is subject to idiosyncrasies, the collectively shared image of an organisation held by most stakeholders, when managed properly, allows for coordination of organisational activity that is consistent with stakeholder expectations. To this extent, the organisational image management theory is relevant to this study because it gives a guide on how the image management of NSCDC can be maintained for positive media reportage.

However, since the Organisational Image Management Theory manages image situations and sustains positive image for the Corps, there is a need to look at a theory that takes care of urgent image management needs, like that of the incidence of the "Oga at the Top". Hence, the inclusion of the Image Repair Theory to the study, which proffers strategies that could urgently handle image issues, like the one the NSCDC had with the "Oga at the Top" incident.

Image Repair Theory

Image Repair Theory in public relations has its root embedded in both rhetoric, mostly political rhetoric and social science. Social science has a long history of development in public relations. Five image repair strategies with sub-categories have emerged from this line research: denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective actions, and mortification (Benoit & Pang, 2008, pp. 247-251).

When using denial, a communicative entity can either use simple denial by claiming that it did not perform the act, or shift the blame by saying someone else is responsible. In evasion of responsibility, the communicative entity can argue it was provoked and responded to the act of another, argue defeasibility due to a lack of information or ability, and claim the event was an accident or it has good intentions. Communicative entities can also aim to reduce the offensiveness of an act through bolstering (stress its own good traits), minimisation (the act is not as serious as presented), differentiation (act is not as offensive as other similar ones), transcendence (there are more important considerations), attacking the accuser, or compensating the victims. When using corrective action as an image repair strategy, the communicative entity offers a plan to solve or prevent a problem. When apologizing, the communicative entity (organisation) practices mortification.

Image repair strategies are seldom used in isolation. When an organisation uses a combination of bolstering, shifting blame, and corrective action, it uses separation as an image repair strategy. The image repair theory is relevant to this study, because it provides for solutions of image management problems like the one face by Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps after the "Oga at the Top" incident.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey method to investigate image management strategies of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, after the infamous "Oga at the Top" interview. The survey method is appropriate for obtaining opinions of people in large population setting, and allows for standardised, quantified, and qualitative data (O'Leary, 2005). The survey methods therefore lend itself to this study by virtue of the large population

and the aim/objective of the study; the survey method was used to ascertain opinions and dispositions of respondents on the subject matter.

The population for the study was drawn from the Abuja Municipal Area Council in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The Abuja municipal area council was appropriate for the population of this study, because it is the largest and most developed council area in Abuja, at the same time, it plays host to the headquarters of most of the federal agencies, including the national headquarters of the NSCDC, NSCDC Academy, and all the military and paramilitary agencies in Nigeria. The national population census of 2006 puts the population of Abuja Municipal Area Council at 776, 298 and, as projected in 2017, 1,040,239. However, since the population was too large for the study, Taro Yamani Yard's statistical formula was applied to get the required sample for the study.

The sample size for this study was 400 respondents. This was derived from using the Taro's statistical formula, where " n " is sample size sought; " e " represents the level of significance $(0.05)^2$, and " N " is the population size. The choice of Taro was informed by the virtue of its suitability in the determination of sample from heterogeneous and finites population.

The multistage sampling technique involving cluster, and purposive and simple random sampling was used for this study. The Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) which is the area of the study was clustered into two zones. Zone A includes: Asokoro 55 streets, Maitama 71, Lugbe 56, Gariki 97, Utako/Jabi 55, while Zone B has Nyanya six streets, Gwarinpa nine, Central Business Area 16, Wuse 406, and Kabusa\Gwagwa 31. In total, Zone A has 334 streets while Zone B has 468 streets. The cluster sampling technique is used when "natural" but relatively heterogeneous groupings are evident in a statistical population.

Within the Zones A and B clusters, the researcher for the purpose of the research simple randomly selected five streets in each of the zones. Making it a total of 10 streets from the two clustered zones, simple random procedure works with the proportion of the population needed for the research (Ohaja, 2003). The sampling starts by writing everything in the frame on a piece of paper, and initiated a draw after they were placed in a container. Using the hand drawing method, any street picked from the draw was deemed to have been selected. The drawing was done without replacement and continued until the five streets from each cluster were selected. However, the actual selection of the 400 respondents was done purposively. The researcher first asked potential respondents, if they are residents or workers in the selected streets and if they are familiar with the NSCDC. A further bias was to find out if they knew about the "Oga at the Top" incident. Those who answered in the affirmative were selected for the study, and they did not exceed the required 40 respondents from each street.

The major instrument of data collection for this study was the questionnaire and the interview schedule. The questionnaire was used to gather information from the respondents while the interview schedule was used to elicit information from the public relations officers of the NSCDC.

The second instrument, which is interview schedule, has eight major questions that are directed to the public relation offices of the Corps at the national headquarters, Rivers State Command, and Akwa Ibom State Command. Apart from the National Headquarters that was purposively selected as the hub of PR policies and practices of the Corps; the other two state commands were randomly selected to complement the response from the national headquarters.

The respondents were purposively sampled because of their knowledge about the NSCDC and the "Oga at the Top" incident. In total, 400 copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents living or working in those selected streets. Purposive sampling technique includes subjects or elements selected for specific

characteristics or qualities and eliminates those who fail to meet these criteria (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Babbie (2011, cited in Koko, 2017) also argued that it is sometimes appropriate and valid to select a sample on the basis of knowledge that such a sample meets the purpose for the investigation.

Forty respondents which were purposively sampled from each of the 10 streets of Asokoro, Maitama, Wuse, Gariki, Utako/Jabi, Lugbe, Gwarinpa, Central area, Nyanya, and Kabusa/Gwagwa all in Abuja Municipal Area Council were administered the questionnaire. Out of the 400 copies of questionnaire distributed, 371 (92.75%) were retrieved, correctly filed and used for the analysis in this study. The remaining 29 copies of the questionnaire (7.25%) were either not retrieved or not correctly filled and could not be used for the analysis. Data gathered through the questionnaire are presented in frequency tables and simple percentages, while those from the interview are presented in the third person point of view narrative and explanation building approach.

On the image management strategies adopted by the Corps to tackle its image challenges after the “Oga at the Top” incident, data in Table 1 show that majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the strategies were effective.

Table 1

The Image Management Strategies Adopted by NSCDC After the “Oga at the Top” Incident Were Effective

Option	No. of respondents	% of respondents
SA	50	13.5
A	176	47.4
N	38	10.2
D	97	26.1
SD	10	2.7
Total	371	100

Also, this study sought to find out if the NSCDC can reclaim positive image for the Corps after the “Oga at the Top” incident. Data in Table 2 show that majority of the respondents, (58.8% and 25.3%) representing 218 and 94 respondents, strongly agreed and agreed respectively that NSCDC can reclaim positive image for the Corps after the “Oga at the Top” incident. Details are as presented in Table 2:

Table 2

NSCDC Can Reclaim Positive Image for the Corps After the Oga at Top Incident

Option	No. of respondents	% of respondents
SA	218	58.8
A	94	25.3
N	38	10.2
D	21	5.7
SD	0	0
Total	371	100

Three respondents were billed and actually interviewed for this study. They were the civil defence public relations officer, national headquarters, Abuja, and two commands public relations officers in the South-South Geopolitical zones of Nigeria—Rivers and Akwa Ibom States. These interviews were necessary to gather adequate information to answer specific research questions that centre on the image management strategies adopted by NSCDC and the utilisation of PR in NSCDC to provide for effective image management. Data gathered from the transcribed interviews showed that the concept of public relations is not an accidental affair

but a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort meant to polish the image of the Corps. Therefore, on the image management of the NSCDC, the national headquarters PRO noted that the image management strategies of the Corps include: carrying out public enlightenment programmes, organising workshops and seminars for media operatives and correspondents, engaging top show talks by bringing in experts to talk about the Corps, cultivating friendship with professional groups that can project the image of the Corps at different fora, and engaging different editors for editorial comments, articles, and features.

In a corroborative view, the PRO of Akwa Ibom and Rivers States noted that in order to better manage the image of the organisation; their commands subdivided the image management strategies of the Corps into different sub-headings. For the Akwa Ibom State Command public relations officer, he mentioned:

1. Wish image: Reflecting the image the NSCDC wants;
2. Mirror image: What it assumed to be the image of the NSCDC;
3. Multiple images which entails achieving a consistent image using different means, such as newsletter, bulletin, and magazine among others.

The Rivers State counterpart, on the other hand, added five more sub-headings to include:

1. Stereotyped image: Having the image of an organisation (NSCDC, NPF, FRSC, etc.);
2. Current image: The reality of how the organisation is perceived;
3. Positive image: What you are paid to achieve;
4. Negative image: What you are paid to avoid;
5. Corporate image which entails how the organisation is perceived to be.

The establishment of public relations Unit in any organisation is basically to ensure a positive image for the organisation. To this end, this paper sought to find out how the NSCDC utilises public relations to provide for effective image management. On this, the PRO of Rivers State Command stated that he might not be able to give an honest assessment of the situation holistically owing to the fact that not all the commandants know, equip, empower, position, or place the PRO in its rightful place. He noted that, in some states that he had served before, the PRO is grossly underutilised or reduced to a mere “errand boy”. He also noted that most of the PROs in Corps are grossly underfunded but expected to perform optimally. Ordinarily, he said the Rivers State Command utilises public relations effectively through the strategies which includes but not limited to: carrying out public enlightenment programmes, organising workshops and seminars for media operatives and correspondents that cover the Corps activities.

Similarly, the Akwa Ibom State counterpart corroborated this view adding that utilising public relations for effective image management by the NSCDC is basically in line with the strategies well spelt out for the public relations Unit of the Corps. The NSCDC utilises public relations to achieve goodwill and public acceptance of the Corps. In a supportive view, the national headquarters PRO stressed that besides other considerations in achieving a positive image for the Corps, the NSCDC creates an enabling environment for the public relations officers to operate and carry out their statutory duties effectively.

In a similar response, the PRO of Akwa Ibom State Command noted that NSCDC had taken critical steps, some of which are on-going to redeem the image of the Corps. He noted that the Corps engaged some experts and opinion leaders who disabused the minds of people from the perceived damage done to the image of the Corps after the “Oga at the Top” incident, swiftly responded to calls from the media circle, and utilised every possible opportunity to disabuse the minds of people who had already formed a negative perception about the Corps.

On his part, the Rivers State Command PRO noted that the “Oga at the Top” incident opened a page on general image and reputation management in the history of the PR practice in the Corps; saying that a timely reaction would have solved the problem. While saying that the delay in correcting the mistake generated the scandal; he noted that as the bridge between the organisation and the media, he tried to build a better relationship with the media so as to minimise further damage.

In his own concluding remarks, the national headquarters PRO noted that the Information Units of the Corps had taken steps, some of which are still on-going, to redeem the image of the agency. He said the Corps had granted interviews, released some publications, and featured prominent personalities in interaction media-public engagement to disabuse the minds of the people by making them to see that the “Oga at the Top” analogy connotes respect for a superior master in the paramilitary and military parlance and not ignorance.

Test of Hypotheses

Test of Hypothesis One

Hypothesis 1: There is a no significant relationship between the image management strategies of the NSCDC and the corporate image of the Corps.

Table 3

Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the Relationship between Image Management Strategies of NSCDC and the Corporate Image of the Corps

Variable decision rule	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	<i>r</i> -cal.	<i>r</i> -crit.	<i>df.</i>	<i>p</i> < 0.05
Image management strategies of NSCDC	2,898		2,545	0.135	0.098	369	Reject null
Corporate image of the Corps	936	2,762					

Note. Significant at 0.05 alpha level, *df.* = 369.

Test of Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis 2: Image management of the NSCDC is not positively affected by the public relations practice of the Corps.

Table 4

Pearson Product Moment Correlation of the Relationship Between Image Management of NSCDC and Public Relations Practice of the Corps

Variable decision rule	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	<i>r</i> -cal.	<i>r</i> -crit.	<i>df.</i>	<i>p</i> < 0.05
Image management of NSCDC	936	2,762					
Public relations practice of the Corps	1,139	4,023	2,743	0.284	0.098	369	Reject null

Note. Significant at 0.05 alpha level, *df.* = 369.

Result of the analysis on Table 3 shows that the calculated *r*-value for the relationship between image management strategies of NSCDC and the corporate image of the Corps is 0.135 which is higher than the critical *r*-value of 0.098 at 0.05 level of significance and 369 degree of freedom. Since the calculated *r*-value is higher than the critical *r*-value, the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between the image management strategies of the NSCDC and the corporate image of the corps is hereby accepted while the null is rejected. Hence, we conclude, on the basis of the data gathered and tested for

significance, that there is a significant relationship between the image management strategies of the NSCDC and the public corporate image of the Corps.

Result of the analysis on Table 4 shows that the calculated r -value for the relationship between image management of NSCDC and the public relations practice of the Corps is 284 which is higher than the critical r -value of 0.098 at 0.05 level of significance and 369 degree of freedom. Since the calculated r -value is higher than the critical r -value, the alternate hypothesis which states that the image management of the NSCDC is positively affected by the public relations practice of the Corps is hereby accepted while the null is rejected. Hence, we conclude here that, based on the data gathered and tested for significance, there is a significant relationship between the image management of the NSCDC and the public relations practice of the Corps.

Discussion of Findings/Implications of the Results

Discussion of the study/paper findings attempts to mirror the implications of the result to the objectives, statement of the problem, theoretical framework, and the literature related and reviewed for the study. Based on this understanding, the two objectives we earlier set out to fulfil will guide our discussion of the results in this section.

Image Management Strategies Adopted by the NSCDC After the Infamous “Oga at the Top” Incident

The data used to analyse this particular expectation were gathered via the in-depth interviews we conducted with NSCDC public relations officers in three commands of the agency. From the available data, it was gathered that the NSCDC adopted different image management strategies to deal with the situation. Prominent among these strategies include: carrying out public enlightenment programmes, organising workshops and seminars for media operatives and correspondents, engaging top show talks by bringing experts to talk about the Corps, its activities and the capacity of its officials in discharging their functions, cultivating friendship with professional groups that can project the image of the Corps at different fora, and engaging newspaper editors for editorial comments, articles, and features.

The data gathered also revealed that the image management strategies adopted by the Corps have engendered a cordial relationship between the media and the Corps. Available data show that the relationship between the NSCDC and media has been very cordial and is still improving daily. This current relationship is largely due to the Corps’ constant collaboration and engagement of the media and other relevant stakeholders in showcasing the core mandates of the Corps.

This finding is in line with the Organisational Image Management Theory which holds that organisations must sustain an effective image with their stakeholders in order to maximise their chances for success. Similarly, Garbett (1988) noted that organisations must sustain an effective image with their stakeholders, in order to maximise their chances for success.

Extent the NSCDC Utilise Public Relations in its Corporate Image Management of the Corps

From the available data gathered through the in-depth interview, we conclude that the Corps utilises public relations in order to provide for effective corporate image management. Although in some states’ command of the agency, it was discovered that the public relations officers were grossly underutilised or reduced to a mere “errand boy”, grossly underfunded, and still expected to perform optimally in such adverse circumstances. In most other states’ command, the NSCDC creates an enabling environment for the public relations officers to operate and carry out their statutory duties effectively.

This finding is very essential for the maintenance of good image of the organisation. According to Treadwell and Harrison (1995) as cited in Joseph (2003), “although challenging, organisations must engage in image management in order to be successful” (p. 46). They emphasise that organisations image management is important for at least two reasons. First, image determines responses toward the organisation. Second, shared images make possible the independent relationships that exist between organisations and stakeholders.

In essence, the data gathered, analysed, and discussed in this paper align with the related literature reviewed and the theoretical framework for the study. The argument here therefore supports existing conclusions on the subject. In other words, we can conclusively argue that public relations are a critical variable for any organisation wishing to build and sustain a positive corporate image for itself in the public domain. Without public relations, corporate image management in organisations will be wasted efforts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Building and sustaining positive corporate image for an organisation is a process that is systematic, continuing, and consistent. Any break in this process affects the public perception of the organisation. This is why public relations are a critical variable in corporate image management. In conclusion, therefore, we reiterate the age-long argument that an effective public relations practice within an organisation is essential in building and sustaining a positive corporate image for such an organisation. Based on this argument, it is recommended that the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps should strengthen the public relations Unit within the agency and ensure that only trained PR practitioners and/or experts are employed to manage the Unit. This will help nip in the bud circumstances, such as the infamous “Oga at the Top” incident that nearly marred the corporate image of the Corps beyond repair.

It is our informed view that the infamous interview by a senior official of the agency in the person of the Lagos State Commandant, presented the Corps officials as a crop of incompetent and poorly trained officials with low intelligence quotient. This is not the case but when critical and seemingly simple questions are answered the way and manner the Lagos State Commandant of the Corps answered them, then there is need to understand the public perception and possibly give it some credibility. However, our major concern here is to reiterate the fact that if the public relations unit of the Corps was involved in prepping the commandant for the interview as well as being part of the entire process leading to the interview, the outcome would have been different. We therefore recommend that the commandants and other high-ranking officers of the Corps should endeavour to involve the public relations officers (PROs) in their external engagements, and NSCDC through its public relations unit should try to maintain and possibly improve on its relationship with the different media establishments within their Command for mutually beneficial relationship to thrive.

It is also recommended that NSCDC should ensure periodic seminars and enlightenment programmes for men and officers of the Corps, to avoid activities and actions that would portray the Corps negatively. It is further argued that the public relations Unit should be involved in drawing up and executing such periodic seminars and enlightenment programmes so as to maximise the potential benefits.

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