Possibility to bridge the gaps: Defining the issues that affect on global online public relations practice

RashaAlyaqoub, Ahmad Alsharairi

ABSTRACT
Public relations (PR) plays a dynamic role in any organization, and it aspires to maintain the mutual long-term between the organization and the beneficial public relationships through achieving a balance between the interests of each party. in addition, PR have an influential role in improving relations between countries and global organizations. As has become known, the Internet has changed not only the world radically but also the practices of pr. Especially that two-thirds of the world's population use networking sites. Indeed, online PR restructuring of the radical practices of public relations. Due to the increasing popularity of the online PR role, this article intends to discover the research gaps that effect on the online PR practice in the world. Review of the literature found that there are a lot of gaps, researchers must discovered in the future to enhance the global online PR practice , such as: conceptualize online PR among practitioners, the technical skills that PR practitioner should have, the antecedent factors influencing the practice, the consequences of the ability to adequately utilize online PR, the current use of online PR tools, Mechanisms for the development the performance and additional qualitative research that offers potential contributions to an increased understanding of social media's role in PR and organizational communication.
KEYWORDS: *online public relations, global,practice, gaps, issues, practitioners.*

I.   INTRODUCTION

Aronson, Spetner and Ames (2010) argued that PR today is considered to be one of the most vital communication tools for companies, organizations, countries and product marketers because all compete creating, enhancing, and projecting positive public images. Effective PR writing remains at the heart of agile and innovative marketing that technology and traditional PR tools have made it possible to communicate with customers, to expand audiences, and to reach target audiences. Blogs, E-mail, digital newsletters, live conference calls, search engines, podcasts, RSS, viral marketing, and websites are just a few of the tools now available to PR professionals (Aronson, Spetner& Ames, 2010).

In an applied communication discipline and management function, information and communication technologies (ICT) greatly affect PR (Zerfaß, Tench, Verčič, Verhoeven, & Moreno, 2014). This relationship with new ICT began in the mid-1990s, and, as technology evolved, Internet technology has significantly impacted PR practices (Verčič&Verčič, 2015; Ye & Ki, 2012). One study that discovered the use of Internet practitioners in this early period the study was that of Gustafson and Thomsen (1996) who determined that practitioners would begin spending additional time online with clients and media audiences within a short time and that practitioners would also begin to count more on databases and information services (Gustafson & Thomsen, 1996). Furthermore, Rayan (1999) noted that, according to a survey of PRSA members, many used the Internet to monitor government activities. Indeed, the Internet has been described as a way to put great power and reach into the hands of practitioners (Ryan, 1999).

Online PR serves several functions. Online PR can be a method to create media relations, to issue media releases electronically and to generate publicity using several corporate online communication technologies (Du Plessis, 2005). Also, online PR may provide unique ways of promoting an organization and its products or services and enhancing visibility in a virtual environment (Petrovici, 2014). Furthermore, online PR can support the general goals of PR, and help to balance long-term relationships between and among an organization and its target groups (Fischer, 2006, as cited in Petrovici, 2014) .

Moreover, the technologies related to online PR are connected with the possibility of interactivity. Indeed, online PR offers a target public the opportunity to interact with an organization and to receive an instant response, which, in turn, establishes effective and mutually advantageous communication (Haig, 2000). Therefore, online PR can become concerned with what an audience is doing with online media technologies rather than merely what these technologies are doing to an audience (Kelleher, 2006; Kirat, 2007).

Indeed, new technology has become a very researched area in PR (Pasadeos, Berger, & Renfro, 2010). Nonetheless, the literature examining online PR remains in its early stages (Alfonso & de Valbuena Miguel, 2006; Ye & Ki, 2012). While scholars and PR theorists consider online PR as emergent organizational practice. Computer technology has become indispensable and has begun to revolutionize the PR industry (Du Plessis, 2005). Despite the study of technology and its impact on PR, online PR remains a non-standardized term used as the assorted studies often depend on the specific definition of the researcher and his experience in this field.

The online PR concepts

Though online PR has been the main subject of much recent research, scholars and researchers have not agreed on a consistent definition of online PR. For example, Alfonso and de Valbuena Miguel (2006) found that some of them called online PR as "Net relations", "Webbed PR" or "Online PR" (Kitchen &Panopoulos, 2010; Seo et al., 2009; Ye & Ki, 2012). Other studies have utilized the term "Internet-related/focused PR" (Khang, Ki, & Ye, 2012; Ye & Ki, 2012),"digital PR" (Duhé, 2015; Hallahan, 2004; Huang, Wu, & Huang, 2017; Kirkwood, 2017; Komodromos& Nicoli,2016; Phillips, 2001). And the "Internet", "new media," and "social media" Khang et al., 2012; Zhang & Leung, 2015), electronic PR (Panopoulos, 2007) and "E-PR" (Haig, 2000; Petrovici, 2014).

As a result, although many studies have been conducted under the nomenclature of online PR when the studies are examined, the observation can be made that the researchers have used terms other than online PR. Instead, they have used terms such as social media in general or any part of them like blogs, Facebook and Instagram (Bashir &Aldaihani, 2017; Berdine, 2015; DiStaso, McCorkindale, & Wright, 2011; Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008; Evans ,Twomey, & Talan, 2011; James,2013; Kelleher, 2008; Kim, 2014; Murray, 2009; Phillips & Young, 2009). In addition, some studies utilized website/web-based PR (Ahn, 2008; Duke, 2002; Hegel, 2004; Hill & White, 2000; Jun 2011; Yuliarti, 2013; Alexander, 2002; Kim, Park & Wertz, 2010; Sommerfeldt et al., 2012). Meanwhile, still others some utilized chat room, email, the world wide web, or the Internet in general (Hallahan, 2004; Kisiołek, Kolmasiak&Budzik, 2003).

Thus, based on the literature reviewed for this article, some significant research gaps in this area have been identified. Scholars have highlighted the need for further investigation to broaden the knowledge and understanding the constructing online PR in the world through knowing how do PR practitioners conceptualize online PR, the technical skills that PR practitioner should have for online PR tasks, the antecedent factors influencing the practice of online PR among PR practitioners, the consequences of the ability to adequately utilize online PR practitioners, how they currently use of online PR tools, and how can PR practitioners improve their performance in this situation . In addition to many gaps related to this area.

The research gaps

First, previous studies have pointed out that a misunderstanding exists in the concept of online PR among practitioners. In some measure, this is because practitioners need to understand the system fully before accepting it for usage (Rahman, 2014). Bhargava (2010) found that the PR practitioners do not fully understand the nature of the online PR concept, its tools and the scope of utilization in their practice. Consequently, the lack of understanding of the use of Internet tools, and, at the same time, their use in PR has led to a lack of understanding of online PR (Kent & Suffer, 2014). Indeed, Fitch (2009) and Liptak (2012) argued that a reason for not understanding Internet tools was because of the lack of knowledge and technical skills. This deficiency in working with social media has meant that at least some PR practitioners were not comfortable with the changing communication patterns. Also, Liptak (2012) said that age affected the utilization of social media effectively in that older practitioners were less likely to use social media effective than were younger practitioners. Robson and James (2013) asserted that the main reason for the inability of practitioners to adopt and understand the concept of online PR in their work was the absence of a clear and defined strategy by the institution. This confirms that the absence of the role of an organization in developing specific strategies leads to the failure of participants to understand and apply these tools in their work (Robson & James, 2013). Furthermore, Toledano and Avidar (2016) found that practitioners did not understand the concept of online PR because of either a lack of knowledge or because they did not care about the concept. Inya (2017) concluded that a lack of real awareness of the concept and importance of online PR has led to the little use of the media by practitioners in institutions of higher education.

Second, much of the PR literature concerning the Internet focuses on adoption rates and the perceptions of PR practitioners while an understanding of how organisations use social media in their PR practices is limited (Robson, 2013). Despite the popularity of social media studies related to PR, Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) noted that significant gaps remain in the knowledge related to how organizations are using social media and how these valuable new communication channels either can or should be utilized in the context of PR (Macnamara&Zerfass, 2012). Also, scant empirical research exists that applies PR theories to organisational social media use, and best practice suggestions are often provided based on existing theoretical principles or industry case studies without any relevant empirical research for support (Robson, 2013).

At the time, other studies have just focused on whether there is online PR usage among PR practitioners or not.Thus, the objective of these studies is not meant to explore the phenomenon, the depth of usage, or the reasons for its used and how (Alikilic&Atabek,2012; BinShaikh,Albaloushi, Almansori, & Al Husani, 2016; Calvi, Cassella, &Nuijten, 2010; Campbell, Lambright, & Wells, 2014; Cassidy & Fitch,2012; Curtis et al., 2010; Eyrich, Padman, &Sweetser, 2008; Fitch, 2009; Gabriel & Koh, 2016; Joo& Teng, 2016; Kang &Norto, 2006; Komodromos, 2014; Macnamara, 2010; Robson &James, 2013; Saka &Göncü, 2017; Vosoghpour& Jafari, 2016; Wigley & Zhang, 2011 ;Yang & Kent, 2014; Young, 2017).

Third, many studies found that antecedent factors influence the acceptance of the concept of online PR. Cost is one antecedent factor that affects the online PR concept (Parveen, Jaafar&Ainin, 2015; Stockhausen, 2014; Young, 2017). Age and organizational commitment have also been found to be antecedent factors (Ahn, 2008; Lee, Sha, & Sargent, 2015; Linke&Zerfass, 2013). Other studies have found that the acceptance of the online PR practice concept is related to authoritarian decision-making and a lack of education and skills (Al-Shohaib, Kandari, & Abdulrahim, 2009; Al-Shohaib, Frederick, Jamal Al-Kandari, &Dorsher, 2010;Ayish, 2005; Bashir &Aldaihani, 2017; James, 2007; Fitch, 2009; Kirat, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2016; Robson & James, 2013; Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2015).

Forth, other studies found that there are many consequences factors for the ability to use online PR by PR practitioners for their organizations. Young (2017) argued that the ability to use online PR in organizations has a significant consequence for promoting their organization and services. Moreover, Cho, Schweickart and Haase (2014) and Kelleher and Sweetser (2012) found that ability to use online PR essential to create a two-way communication, interactivity, dialogue, and engagement with publics via social media. Furthermore, Campbell, Lambright, and Wells (2014) and Moreno, Navarro, Tench and Zerfass (2015) confirmed that ability of high level of usage of social media give more importance to social media channels, influence of social media on internal and external stakeholders and relevance of key gatekeepers and stakeholders along with a better self-estimation of competences. Xifra and Grau (2010) argued that the use of online PR has another consequence like building and maintaining a positive image. While, Graham, Avery and Park (2015) confirmed that the ability to this use help to control a crisis.

Fifth, several studies have examined the level of ICT of practitioners and have shown that the rate of use and adoption is very high, and this high level has provided more import to social media channels as means to influence internal and external stakeholders (DiStaso, McCorkindale, & Wright, 2011; Macnamara, 2010; Moreno, Navarro, Tench, &Zerfass, 2015; Robson &Sutherl, 2012; Wigley & Zhang, 2011).Alikilic and Atabek (2012) and Nwaeke and Nsereka (2016) found the level of ICT in PR practice to below.Therefore, because of the lack of agreement between the previous literature on the level of ICT of PR practitioners, this recommendsverifying the level of ICT among PR practitioners.

Sixth, despite the above-mentioned empirical studies, the literature indicates a few empirical studies have examined the utilization of online PR among PR practitioners, especially in higher education. Many studies have recommended the importance of studying this area to understand the implementation of online PR in organizations by PR practitioner (Campbell, Lambright, & Wells, 2014;Komodromos, 2014;Toledano &Avidar, 2016). Therefore, many studies have recommended the need to study and explore how PR practitioners use PR as a tool in universities (Inya, 2017; McAllister, 2012).

Seventh, because quantitative methodology comprises more than 80% of the social media research in PR journals (Khang, Ki, & Ye, 2012), additional qualitative research is required to grasp an understanding of the lived experiences of practitioners and organisations using and managing social media. Additional qualitative research offers potential contributions to an increased understanding of social media's role in PR and organisational communication (Robson, 2013). Meanwhile, many studies have recommended using the qualitative in-depth interview method to explore and understand why and how a PR practitioner utilizes online PR (Alasfor, 2016; Alikilic&Atabek, 2012; Avery, Lariscy, & Sweetser, 2010; Bélanger, Bali, & Longden, 2014; Briones, Janoske, & Paquette, 2013; El-Kasim &Idid, 2016; Gao, 2016; Lee, Sha, Dozier, & Sargent, 2015; Macnamara, 2010; McAllister, 2012; Roback, 2017; Robson & James, 2011; Seko, 2012; Vardeman-Winter & Place, 2015; Veletsianos, Kimmons, Shaw, Pasquini, & Woodward, 2017).

Eighth,many researchers believed that people might not be able to use and to take advantage of online public relations if they don't have enough technical skills (Badran, 2014; Elkarhili, 2014; Kirat, 2016). Furthermore, Bashir and Aldaihani (2017) argued that practitioners of public relations do not have technical skills that enable them to use social media. Such absence of skills can be a barrier to those practitioners and can result in an unwillingness to use social media. Also, practitioners may lose their interest and passion for using it.Therefore, studies should be conducted to identify the skills needed to improve the performance of PR practitioners.

Ninth, because this area is relatively recent, and PR practitioners often utilize these modern technological tools simplistically and modestly without a particular strategy. Therefore, proposing specific mechanisms to develop an understanding of how to achieve PR objectives fully is necessary . Indeed, many studies have recommended conducting additional research to learn more about the effectiveness of these tools

and understand how the advantage of these tools can be increased.For example, Alikilic and Atabek (2012) suggested that integrating social media into the curriculum of higher education PR programs to build a better understanding of these tools is critical. Campbell, Lambright and Wells (2014) recommended increasing the awareness of the value of social media and that scholars should share their research with leaders of public and non-profit organizations on how social media can be used not just for one-way communication but also to engage stakeholders in interactive dialogues.

Gordon (2010) said that "because social media are viewed as untrustworthy, inaccurate and not credible" (p. 45), more research should be conducted both on those using these new media outlets, especially those who publish blogs and on how to raise credibility. Because of the controversial nature of this topic, one recommendation is for a credible organization to create and promulgate a bloggers code of ethics.

Finally, most studies about online PR among PR practitioners are conducted in the Western and the developed country context like in the United States (Sen, 2014; Sweetser & Kelleher, 2011; Wigley & Zhang, 2011), in Australian (Cassidy & Fitch, 2012; Macnamara, 2010), in the United Kingdom (Bridgen, 2011), in Canada (Bélanger, Bali & Longden, 2014), in the Mid Atlantic community (Young, 2017), in Malaysian (Gabriel & Koh, 2016), in Turkey (Alikilic&Atabek, 2012), in Europe (Moreno, Navarro, Tench, &Zerfass, 2015), in South Korea (Park,2016), and in Spain (Xifra& Grau, 2010).

Furthermore, previous literature has recommended studying online PR in other contexts like in developing or non-Western Countries(Alasfor, 2016; Al-Jenaibi, 2015; Al-Shohaib, Frederick, Al-Kandari&Dorsher, 2010; Komodromos, 2014; Toledano &Avidar, 2016; Veletsianos, Kimmons, Shaw, Pasquini, & Woodward,2017).

II. CONCLUSION

This is article offer new insight about global constructing an online PR. Doing so will also help in filling the gaps in online PR area in the word through knowing how do PR practitioners conceptualize online PR, the technical skills that PR practitioner should have for online PR tasks, the antecedent factors influencing the practice of online PR among PR practitioners, the consequences of the ability to adequately utilize online PR practitioners, how they currently use of online PR tools, and how can PR practitioners improve their performance in this situation. Because this is area still new, this is article recommend to studying online PR in other contexts like in developing or non-Western. in addition to, Additional qualitative research which offers potential contributions to an increased understanding of social media's role in PR and organisational communication .

In general, this is article tries to provide theoretical and practical implications of the trends of research in the future. Future studies should continue to provide more ideas for this emerging and A promising area of research through various views and theories merge, and Approach.In addition to studying the role of online PR between international organizations and how they affect the relationships of countries and policies uses.

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