Social Media's Role in Public Relations in Croatia

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Master thesis

Vanessa Gluhaković

Zagreb, September, 2021

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ULOGA DRUŠTVENIH MEDIJA U ODNOSIMA S JAVNOŠĆU U HRVATSKOJ

Master thesis

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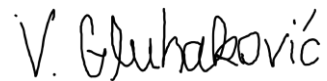Mentor: Ana Tkalac Verčič, PhD.

Zagreb, September, 2021

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Summary

Social media impacted various lines of work, therefore, it is important to research its impact on the public relations practice. It is a part of new media and a new source of communication. In this thesis, the focus is on describing the term of public relations and social media. When these terms are defined it is important to define the impact of social media on public relations. Social media's impact, in general, is strong. Since public relations' focus is on communication, social media plays a significant role in its practice. The emphasis of the thesis is on the impact of social media on public relations in Croatia. Public relations agencies' and practitioners' opinions about social media are thoroughly researched and defined in the thesis. Social media largely changed the way of communication for the general population, therefore the impact for practice that focuses on communicating and forming relationships between companies and their publics, is significant. In this thesis, it is defined how public relations developed as a practice. In the past, the focus was entirely on the traditional media which is defined as well. This has changed and today social media has greater power in communicating than traditional media. The research confirms that traditional media's role isn't as important as the role of social media. However, traditional media is still an important type of media for the Croatian public relations practice. There are few concerns about social media, however, it presents more advantages than disadvantages both in general and for the practice of public relations.

Key words

Social media, public relations, impact, practice, traditional media

Sažetak

Društveni mediji su utjecali na razne vrste poslova, stoga je važno istražiti utjecaj društvenih medija na posao odnosa s javnošću. Društveni mediji su dio novih medija te novi izvor komunikacije. U diplomskom radu, fokus je na objašnjavanju pojma odnosa s javnošću i društvenih medija. Nakon što su ovi pojmovi objašnjeni i jasni, važno je definirati utjecaj društvenih medija na odnose s javnošću. Utjecaj društvenih medija je općenito snažan. S obzirom da je fokus odnosa s javnošću komunikacija, društveni mediji imaju važnu ulogu u njihovu poslu. Naglasak diplomskog rada je na utjecaju društvenih medija na odnose s javnošću u Hrvatskoj. Mišljenja agencija za odnose s javnošću te stručnjaka za odnose s javnošću su temeljito istražena i definirana u diplomskom radu. Društveni mediji su uvelike promjenili način komuniciranja za globalnu populaciju, stoga utjecaj na odnose s javnošću koji se odnosi na komuniciranje i formiranje odnosa između kompanija i njihovih javnosti je značajan. U ovom diplomskom radu, definirano je kako su se odnosi s javnošću razvijali u praksi. U prošlosti, fokus odnosa s javnošću je u potpunosti bio na tradicionalne medije koji su također definirani. Došlo je do promjena, te danas društveni mediji imaju veću moć u komuniciranju od tradicionalnih medija. Istraživanje dokazuje da uloga tradicionalnih medija nije važna kao što je uloga društvenih medija. Međutim, tradicionalni mediji su i dalje važna vrsta medija za odnose s javnošću u Hrvatskoj. Postoje određeni problemi sa društvenim medijima, međutim, predstavljaju više prednosti nego mana kako za cijeli svijet tako i za posao odnosa s javnošću.

Ključne riječi

Društveni mediji, odnosi s javnošću, utjecaj, uloga, tradicionalni mediji

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis covers two areas public relations and social media. The focus of the thesis is to connect them. It is also important to connect them with public relations agencies and practitioners in Croatia since the research portion of the thesis focuses on them. Social media has changed people's lifes and the way they work in general. It applies to the public relations practice as well. Because of technology advancement, social media became exceptionally important for the lives of many and their work. In this thesis the focus is on connecting social media and public relations in order to see its role in the public relations practice. It is also crucial to research how do social media practitioners view social media and what is their opinion towards it which will be covered in the research portion of the thesis.

1.1.   Defining the subject of the thesis

The thesis focuses on the current effect of social media on public relations. It's crucial to determine how social media impacted the work of public relations. In the thesis it will be discussed has social media brought more advantages or disadvantages to the public relations. In the past, public relations were focused on the traditional media therefore it is also important to define the connection between traditional media and social media in the thesis.

1.2.   The goal of the thesis

The aim of this thesis is to link the terms social media and public relations in order to determine how social media has influenced public relations and whether social media improves or degrades the quality of public relations work. Goal of the thesis is to research do public relations practitioners have positive or negative opinion towards social media. Goal for the research part of the thesis, is to define how Croatian public relations agencies and professionals use social media in order to see whether they have achieved sufficient results. Theoretical and analytical cognition about public relations and social media will be broadened as a result of this thesis. It is a very current subject, and with this thesis, the term "social media" in public relations work, as well as its significance, will become clearer.

1.3. Research methods

The thesis' methodology is focused on secondary data gathered from articles and books. In addition, primary research is conducted using telephone surveys obtained from public relations agencies and practitioners in order to gather and interpret their responses. This is a quantitative research method. The survey is aimed at public relations agencies and practitioners who are familiar with social media and use it in their work. The research sample is representative, consisting of 30 public relations agencies and practitioners. The telephone survey was chosen because it is an easy, fast, and secure method of gathering responses. Male and female respondents will be included in the research survey. The telephone survey will be conducted between July 15th and July 30th, 2021, by contacting PR agencies and practitioners. The respondents will respond to 14 close-ended questions with one or more responses, their own opinion on the subject, and a rating scale to rate how much they agree with the subject. Respondents will voluntarily take part in the survey and will first address demographic questions before moving on to questions about the research subject.

1.4. Thesis structure

Firstly, the thesis's subject and problem are defined, followed by the description of important terms and the research portion of the thesis. It is important to describe the structure in detail as it follows. This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter focuses on introducing and entering the topic of the thesis. It has four subchapters. First subchapter is defining the subject of the thesis, determining what will be discussed in the thesis. The subject of the thesis refers to social media and public relations. The goal of the thesis is the second subchapter in which the aim and purpose of the thesis is described. Third subchapter is dedicated to the research methods, it explains which research methods were used while writing the thesis.

The following second chapter is dedicated to describing public relations and terminology associated with it. In the second chapter firstly is defined the term public relations. Second subchapter refers to explaining how the term developed over time. The third subchapter explains the process of public relations. Forth subchapter defines who are the publics in the public relations. The last subchapter refers to explanation of the public relations' practice.

Furthermore, is a third chapter which is dedicated to the term of social media. The first subchapter defines what is social media. The second chapter describes what are social media networks which are very popular in general and for the public relations practice. The third chapters measures the impact and value of social media for public relations practitioners. Forth chapter is dedicated to describing ethics of social media.

The next, forth chapter connects the concepts social media and public relations before explaining how social media has influenced public relations. The first subchapter explains what kind of impact social media had on the work of public relations. The second subchapter refers to positive and negative aspects of social media for public relations, which benefits and which weaknesses public relations gained from social media usage. The third subchapter describes which social media tools are important for the work of public relations. Forth subchapter is dedicated to the future of both social media and public relations in order to forecast what expects these two terms in the following years.

Furthermore, the thesis's fifth chapter before conclusion, focuses on research into the effect of social media on public relations agencies and practitioners in Croatia. The research will be conducted, as well as its limitations and data collection, in order to present the final chapter. First subchapter focuses on the problem of the research and it aim which is about social media's impact on Croatian public relations practitioners. Second subchapter defines the research sample. The third subchapter is about methodology of the research. Forth chapter is about perhaps the most important portion of the research, because its results are presented, analyzed and interpreted.

Following the research segment of the paper, there will be a summary of the research, which leads to the last chapter a "Conclusion" on all segments of the thesis.

2. PUBLIC RELATIONS DEFINITION

According to Public Relation's Society of America (PRSA), *"Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics''* (Corbett, 2012). The public is saturated with continuous messages of every sort in a world which is overwhelmed with both traditional and non-traditional media. The difficulty for a person trying to communicate lies in all the noise that he/she is trying to block out and provide a convincing, credible, effective argument. In order to achieve that, public relations is often the solution. The strength, impact, importance, worth, and significance of public relations have never been greater than in today's world.

Edward Bernays the father of modern public relations, described public relations as "*a management function, which tabulates public attitudes, defines the policies, procedures and interests of an organization followed by executing a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance* (Breakenridge, 2008, p. xvii)." It represents that public relations assist organizations in establishing and maintaining communication, acceptance and understanding with the public.

Public relations can also be defined as in the following: *''a planned process to influence public opinion, through sound character and proper performance, based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication''* (Seitel, 2017, p. 34). Adding a plan to the definition is significant because it is critical in the practice of public relations, as well as it is important to listen in the public relations since it doesn't consist of one way but of the two-way communication. Public relations are based on ethical principles and appropriate performance in order for it to be beneficial to people. If lacking personality/character and performance, public relations couldn't be able to achieve a long-term impact, it could be only temporary or non-existent. It means that certain individuals can be misleading sometimes, however, it isn't possible to mislead all of the people all the time.

It is important to define public relations thoroughly, furthermore, public relations professionals assist individuals in forming and maintaining successful relationships with third parties (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013). Practitioners are either part of public relations agencies or work independently, for non-profit organizations, or government.

Lattimore describes public relations as: *"a leadership and management function that helps achieve organizational objectives, define philosophy, and facilitate organizational change. Public relations practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics to develop positive relationships and to create consistency between organizational goals and societal expectations"* (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013, p. 4).

Across the whole world, public relations remains among the most active fields in business. One of the reasons for the previously stated is the public relations professionals and their wide range of expertise and practical abilities. Public relations' goal is to build connections and bonds between organizations and their publics: press, media, consumers, workers, shareholders, investors, leaders, and members of communities, activist organizations, and government organizations or agencies. Their relations and interactions should be mutually beneficial (Smith, 2012).

Establishing a long-term situation in which both sides are satisfied demands a lot of compromises based on a shared understanding of each other's aims. Effective communication for both sides sometimes entails success by doing good. Mostly what public relations professionals are trying to communicate is both convincing and purposeful. This is why when trying to define public relations it is important to emphasize encouraging the interchange of impact between an organization's integral elements and the publics (Grunig, 1984). Public relations has been defined as an intentional attempt to impact opinion of the public, usually by convincing communication. Persuasion attempts aimed at informing and changing people's minds about a certain public good are known as social marketing campaigns. Public relations professional creates a message and determines the channel of communication and the marketing professional ensures that the message is delivered (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013).

2.1. The development of the public relations

The field of public relations is dynamic and it's continuously growing and evolving social science. It is also a young field, only over hundred years old. Since public relations is still a relatively young profession, it is continually evolving. It is also becoming stronger and more respected by the day. Professionals entering the field now are vastly superior in terms of intellect, training, and even experience in comparison to their predecessors from decades before (when only a few people studied "public relations") (Seitel, 2017).

The success of today's public relations practice is founded on the lasting nature of the public dedication to participating in a free and open democracy.

There are multiple trends in society which impacted the development of public relations. The development of the large institutions refers to the vanishing of the small government, grocery shops, banks, local press, community universities. Massive political institutions have grown instead, grocery chains like Walmart, Internet evolution which refers to Google and other global media and social platforms. Public relations developed in order to make the publics aware of the big institutions. Public awareness and media sophistication have increased. With the major innovations which refer to print, TV and radio, later, satellite, video, cell phones, mobile phones, Internet, blogs, and social media, the world became a global village in which people are connected live and everywhere (Seitel, 2017). Increasing societal evolution, conflict, and confrontation occurring also impacted public relations practice. As well as globalization, the expanding dominance of global media, public opinion, and democratic capitalism. The world became smaller in size and more interrelated. The Internet domination and the rise of social media brought the connection between people who can immediately communicate (Waddington, 2016).

Ivy Lee was an important person in establishing modern public relations. After he contributed to developing the concept that top companies and people have an obligation of informing the public, the practice spread across the country of America (Levy, 2006). During the Second World War, public relations experienced an increase in its practice. It was an important segment of informing the public. The public relations consulting industry in the twenty-first century, then, is a complex mix of large national agencies, medium-sized regional companies, and one-person local operations. Public relations firms can be broad or specialize in a variety of areas, including consumer goods, entertainment, health care, social media, and technology. In the terms of corporations and their directors, according to research, the public perceives them in high regard (Seitel, 2017).

Major corporations as AT&T showed great effort in maintaining their good reputation. For corporate public relations in order to succeed (Griese, 2001) management needs to thoroughly analyse the overall relation to the public. Management also needs to develop a system for notifying all employees about the general policies of the company.

Furthermore, management needs to develop a system that provides information to the employees that directly interact with the public that they need to be reasonable and courteous to the public. Also it is important to develop a system that directs inquiries and criticism from employees and the general public directly back to the management. Lastly, management needs to assure that the public is informed about the company's operations in a straightforward manner. In today's world dominated by social media and TV, wise corporate directors need educated public relations experts in order to interact with their main public.

2.2. The process of public relations

As it was already established, an effective public relations outcome refers to when the public and an organization mutually understand each other. The process of developing the mutual understanding is separated into steps or stages. Research is an initial step of gathering facts, it identifies problems and distinguishes among the publics. In the terms of planning, after obtaining the facts from several publics, conclusions about their significance and possible influence on the organization must be reached. Following these conclusions, strategies need to be established in order to help the organization accomplish its objectives. In the terms of action and communication, *''strategies are implemented as new organizational policies and/or projects''* (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013, p. 93). The messages are created to reach the intended audiences.

After creating and implementing a campaign, it should be evaluated if it was effective in fulfilling the objectives. The evaluation's findings are helpful to measure effect's success and to organize plans for the future. In order for public relations campaign to be successful, everything previously described must be taken into consideration (Lutrell, 2013).

The process of public relations is connected with communication. Communication must obtain a plan, goal and a purpose. In order for public relations practitioner to succeed, he must have good communication skills which refer to *''writing, speaking, listening, counselling and promoting''* (Seitel, 2017, p. 77). One of the goals of communication is informing.

A purpose of organization's communication is frequently to enlighten, inform or educate a certain audience. Persuasion is also a part of the public relations process. Persuading individuals to do particular activities is a common goal for public relations professionals. It does not need to be overt, instead it can be gentle. Motivation is important for the work of public relations. Employees of the firm should *''pull for the team''* which is a common objective of the organization (Seitel, 2017, p. 78). Motivation refers to stimulating employees to take action. Building of mutual understanding or a simple achievement of comprehending of an opposing group is one of the communication goals, and part of public relations process. In the process of public relations any type or way of communication for example, a speech, can be used to achieve communication goals with the crucial publics. The most effective way to achieve one's objectives is through a well-thought-out strategy.

For the process of public relations is important to emphasis publicity which is a part of public relations communication. It is one early type of communication, which refers to one-way communicating and delivering message from a source to a receiver. Its primary purpose is gaining positive attention from the publics. Public information is also an early kind of one-way communication, with the goal of informing rather than persuading. Two-way asymmetric as advanced two-way communication technique, that allows an organization to publish content while also receiving feedback from the publics, is also part of a public relations process. Two-way symmetric is a favoured method of communication which promotes flow of information based on freedom and equality, between organization and the publics. It is based on mutual understanding. This kind of communication as part of public relations process, is a balanced method in which PR communicator has a mediating role between organization and the publics (Seitel, 2017).

2.3. The publics

Firstly, the public refers to a group of people who have similar characteristics. Different organizations have diverse publics, also known as stakeholders, who have a specific interest in the organization. The media acts as a gatekeeper or censor, allowing public relations professionals to reach out to the broader public and other groups who can help them.

When the media publishes or broadcasts information provided by organizations in news columns or inside a news program, the material appears to offer a feeling of credibility that paid advertising may not provide. Third-party endorsement refers to the status or mark of approval that media coverage bestows on an organization's news and information. Businesses and organizations may now reach out directly to their audiences through social media (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013). The term of social media is described in detail in the third chapter. Despite the lack of media endorsement, individuals enjoy personal nature messaging through for example Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Furthermore, today, public relations has evolved, owing to the replacement of traditional media with tablets and mobile devices, as well as the expansion of social media. Public relations professionals today work with several media, which are described in the following- paid media, owned media, and earned media (Turgeon, 2020).

Paid media is explained by its term, the media that an individual has to pay for. Advertising is the most common kind of sponsored media. Previously the domain of advertising and marketing departments, public relations advertising has evolved into a mix of the two. Organizational powers, concerns, social responsibility, and altruism are more apparent than ever before in advertisements. The advantages of this paid media as with any advertising, are that it is possible to choose the contents, size, and positioning, as well as what the advertising department refers to as "reach" and "frequency" — how many individuals is it possible to impact through advertising and how often for the ad to run (Seitel, 2017). The negative aspect of paid media is the lack of credibility.

New media channels are referred to as owned media, which an individual owns and operates at the same time. It refers to websites and mobile websites, blogging, social media accounts- Twitter, Facebook, and everything which can be included in the social media environment. This marks a new era for public relations and practitioners who are enough aware of social media have a great number of opportunities. The advantage of owned media lies in allowing individuals to manage their content. In contrast with advertising, the cost of setting up and maintaining a social media account is much cheaper than the cost of repeated ads which are aimed at reaching a great number of people. A disadvantage for owned media is the perceived risk of not being regarded as truthful and credible because an individual owns it.

It's difficult for the public to view what individual posts as impartial, therefore they are skeptical. The key issue for public relations practitioners working with owned media is to establish the trust of the public (Seitel, 2014).

Earned media represents the traditional value of "third-party endorsement" in public relations. For earned media, it is important to emphasize that reporters are convinced to publish in a positive form about a certain company. "Traditional news releases, story pitches, press conferences, and other methods centered on creating amicable relationships with reporters, editors, bloggers, and other impartial reporters result in earned media, which converts into favorable PR" (Seitel, 2017). Earned media represents the highest credibility for public relations professionals. However, it doesn't mean that there aren't any consequences of earned media. Negative or unfavorable news about a certain company or organization might lead to a potential crisis in the form of declining support, decreasing prices of the stocks, increasing public criticism, and disaproval. Simply put, while paid media ensures a favorable ad and owned media guarantees a great Facebook account, earned media guarantees nothing. However, with successful earned media the publicity is far more effective, credible, and meaningful than any other type of media. This is why the key of traditional public relations lies in gaining third-party endorsements from impartial journalists and reporters is the final result of effective public relations.

2.3.1. Traditional media

Since social media is described in the following chapter it is also important to introduce traditional media. The backbone of the public information system is continuously newspapers. Newspaper reporters gather the majority of the daily news, particularly public affairs or government, social change, and economic development news (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013). Newspapers are one of the most common ways to reach out to the public.

Newspapers remain a significant influence for setting a public agenda and affecting the result despite the fact that they aren't the main source of the news for the vast majority of the people. On the other hand, people who seek political news are more likely to choose newspapers as their primary source of information, according to research findings.

Daily newspapers provide the most opportunity for public relations professionals in many ways since they need to fill all the space and also they provide a wider selection of certain sections and specialist journalists devoted to issues of environment, well-being, economy, and science.

Newswires provide most of the news for newspapers and television. *"The Associated Press is a cooperative with 1,700 daily and weekly newspapers, as well as 5,000 radio and television stations as their subscribers"* (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013, p. 186). Newspapers are subscribers to news services as well, for example, The New York Times, the newspaper syndicates, News America Syndicate. Public relations newswire provides news releases to over 5000 websites and online resources and also to major media newsrooms.

Magazines are the following type of traditional media, more than half of them published in the U.S. are classified as general-interest consumer papers, while the remaining as trade and industry papers (Baran, 2001). *"Every kind of hobby, interest, and occupation has its own magazine"* (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013, p. 187). Despite this fact, it is a competitive business because only the minority of the publications which are launched each year remain. Magazines, like newspapers, are attempting to navigate a digital world while remaining true to their audience. However, the audience has been decreasing. In order to cut their losses, publishers closed hundreds of papers, reduced their staff and the number of issues published.

Radio is a relatively steady type of media. It has a consistent number of listeners who listen to at least one radio station once a week (Jessell, 2005). However, satellite radio and HD radio have gained popularity lately, but there is a risk of mainstream radio which isn't as high as previously assumed. Only the news/talk radio is popular there is no original news produced, however, there are many options for PR professionals to present local community events and campaigns. PR professionals wanting increased exposure for their organizations and enterprises frequently turn to National Public Radio stations with their information because of its broad reach.

Network, cable, and satellite television remain powerful factors in people's culture and their primary source of news and entertainment is still television. However, commercial networks aren't as popular as they were in the past because streaming services emerged.

Subscribers to satellite and cable TV have access to hundreds of program services and channels, while the innovation of streaming services has relieved viewers from the constraints of program schedule. In terms of public relations, television remains one of the most effective mediums for reaching big audiences on current events, particularly those including conflict (Owen, 2018). Cable news networks were very popular until streaming services were introduced to the public. It is important to mention FOX News, CNN, and MSNBC as the very popular ones.

2.4. The practice of public relations

Different types of organizations benefit from public relations. Governmental organizations and agencies, nonprofit organizations, and corporations all recognized public relations and acknowledged it for enhancing organizational performance in today's dynamic world. In order to be effective for these organizations, PR practitioners and professionals must comprehend the following: *"the communication process, the function of public relations in organizational decision-making, the four-step public relations process, and the key publics of public relations"* (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013, p. 305). Practitioners must also be aware of the difficulties and audiences that are unique to public relations in each type of organization.

Public affairs, which is often used as an overall term for all aspects of public relations, more commonly refers to the component of public relations that deals with an organization's political environment. Public affairs are linked to issues management since it helps firms predict or respond to issues that influence their operations by creating relationships. Efforts in public affairs include attempting to influence public opinion and law-making, formulating effective solutions to public concerns, and assisting the organization in adapting to political demands (Paluszek, 1995).

The practice of public relations in the terms of public affairs, it includes a variety of tasks, including monitoring public policy, providing political education to employees and other constituents, establishing liaisons with various government departments, and encouraging political involvement. *"The most crucial part of public relations work in Washington is unquestionably access to politicians and their staff. Without access, your message will go unheard"* (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013, p. 308). Public affairs professionals help organizations and their political environments communicate in a two-way manner.

Establishing public policy connections between organizations is the focus of public affairs.

In order for all types of organizations (companies, not-for-profit organizations, government bodies) to succeed must interact and create relationships with the government and fully engage with them to impact public policies. Public affairs can also be defined as a term for external affairs, government affairs, and business communications. Most practitioners refer to public affairs as the term for an integrative department that encompasses all, or nearly all, of a company's external nonprofit activities. Public affairs assist an organization in establishing and maintaining positive relationships with multiple groups of individuals (or "public") who have the ability to impact the future. Public relations practice is the public affairs that focus on public policy and on the people who affect it (Paluszek, 1995).

For non-profit organizations, dealing with government is both a difficulty and an opportunity for "unions, schools, hospitals, libraries, cultural organizations, foundations, corporations, and other organizations" (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013). All of these organizations seek to enhance their connections with government entities, observe and impact laws and regulations and raise the awareness and comprehension of people in positions of power. Nonprofit organizations are aware that for their purposes, and perhaps their existence, political skill, and effort are necessary.

Businesses engage in broad public affairs practice. Government serves as both booster and controller in connection to business and the economy. Therefore, businesses must be prepared to engage with the government in order to be successful. Public affairs experts examine and forecast the government's potential interests in a certain company activity. The growing relevance of public affairs and political activities in business has had a significant impact on management and public relations in specific. Since this is a matter of corporate control, top executives participate actively in public relations activities. The government's impact on business is important for the success of the company which must be recognized by the top management. Top management must be involved in public policy as they are involved in other issues (Starling, 1984).

Part of public affairs tasks is dealing with the government which entails a complex system of acquiring, analyzing, and disseminating information. Fact-finding and operating as a listening post are the most significant components of government relations (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013).

Following the collection of data, government relations experts examine and evaluate the information's possible influence on the company. The data is then presented to the executives, employees, stakeholders, and the general public.

Public affairs have the largest effect on an organization when it comes to corporate planning. Although investigation and publicity do not have the power of law, they are obviously among the tools used by the government to influence companies. Government officials may utilize leaks to the media by "high-level sources," trips to the sites of alleged breaches, staged public hearings, and other tactics towards companies. Their public affairs professionals must deal with government public forums as well as specific interest public affairs organizations (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013).

3. SOCIAL MEDIA DEFINITION

Firstly, there is actually no widely recognized definition of the term social media in both practical and theoretical meaning. Based on the previously mentioned, for the social media term, it is easy to say that it conveys the meaning people attach to the concept (Shoemaker, Tankard, & Lasorsa, 2004). Information media and technology that emphasize digital content or user interaction are referred to as social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It is frequently referred to by channel features, which identify either message directivity or the usage of specific platforms like Facebook or Twitter to demonstrate ways of engagement (Kent, 2010); (Howard & Parks, 2012). Even though there are numerous social media definitions, there isn't one precise, clear generally accepted social media definition. Multiple meanings of a term might come from a lack of a consistent definition, making it difficult to reach an agreement about what is social media. Those that facilitate online communication, networking, and/or collaboration is one of the definitions of social media (Russo, Watkins, Kelly, & Chan, 2008).

Furthermore, social media can be defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). There is a problem with previously mentioned definitions of social media because they are excessively broad, they should be more narrow and precise in order to completely understand the term. Social media also refers to the individuals, groups, and companies that create and consume online content. It consists of an infrastructure and tools that are utilized to create and transfer content. Private messages, new information, thoughts, and cultural goods are examples of digital content which equates to social media as well (Howard & Parks, 2012). Social media is often not defined by its features and attributes because individuals link it directly and only to certain online applications (e.g. Facebook or Instagram).

Social media is also any interactive communication channel that allows for two-way interaction and feedback (Kent, 2010); (Howard & Parks, 2012). It includes real-time engagement, reduced anonymity, a sense of proximity, quick response time, and the capacity to connect with the social network at any time when it is convenient for each individual member. (Kent, 2010); (Howard & Parks, 2012). This type of media is connected with user-generated online content which is distinct from traditional media especially in the print form (Terry, 2009).

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Social media are disassociated, continuous Internet-based channels of mass personal communication that facilitate experiences of interactions between users and derive value mainly from user-generated content (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Though this definition is quite technical and intricate, Carr and Hayes offer a more simple definition as well in the following. Social media are Internet-based channels that allow individuals to easily communicate and choose self-presentation with both large and smaller audiences who value user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others, either in real-time or delayed (Carr & Hayes, 2015). In order to conclude defining social media in a clear and simple way, it is the term that is frequently used for referring to new media forms which include interactive engagement of individuals.

All forms of social media include an online platform, either it's mobile or stationary. However, not all digital content is essentially social media. Social media is defined by two features. To begin with, social media includes some kind of participation. Even if social networking platforms like Facebook offer a passive observation of what others are publishing, social media is never fully passive. It involves the creation of some kind of profile in order for an individual to start an interaction. Social media's feature of creating a profile differentiates social media from traditional media. It has a nature of participation therefore it involves interacting with other individuals (Manning, 2014).

Interaction or engagement with others involves an individual's long-term friends, relatives, colleagues, as well as new people who share similar interests or even a shared colleague circle as the individual. Although many types of social media were or are first regarded as something new and innovative, as they become more incorporated into people's lives they become less noticeable over time.

3.1. Types of social media

There are about 13 different types of social media. Social media doesn't refer only to social networks there are various types of social media which are explained in the following. There are blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks, forums, microblogs, photo sharing, product/services reviews, social bookmarking, social gaming, social networks, video sharing, and lastly, there are virtual worlds (Aichner & Jacob, 2015)**.**

Blogs are chronological series of posts that visitors may read and comment on. Individuals and businesses both create blogs, which publish news and other informational items such as product reviews.

People use **business networks** in order to create and retain professional connections. Users that register build a personal profile and submit personal information such as their educational background, career experience, and expertise. Professional networks are largely used by businesses and companies in order to promote themselves as an employer and for the purpose of recruiting new workers or experts (Aichner & Jacob, 2015).

Collaborative projects connect online users with similar interests or set of skills to organize, create, enhance, research, and evaluate academic, technological, scientific, or recreational ventures. The outcomes are often released as open-source and made publicly available. The results are in the form of programs, conclusions, games, outcomes, codes, and games.

Employees of a certain firm or organization can register for **enterprise social networks**, which offer common attributes as social networks. Those are personal accounts, profile images, and so on. Companies want to make sure that their personnel is acquainted with one another and that they can share their thoughts and experiences. With enterprise, social networks, companies can enhance the productivity and effectiveness of their knowledge management.

A **forum** is an online conversation or debate platform through which users are able to question and answer inquiries by other users, as well as share their ideas, views, attitudes, and experiences. Interaction is not instantaneous, as, in a chat room, it is prolonged and most often publicly available.

Microblogs limit posts to 200 characters or less, which could be one of the reasons for their success. Images and links may be included in posts. Individuals can receive news from other visitors, businesses, brands, or famous celebrities by subscribing to their feeds.

Posting, uploading, maintaining, and exchanging images are all services provided by **photo-sharing websites.** The images are frequently editable online, grouped in albums, and commented on by other viewers.

Product/services review refers to online websites which are created for reviewing items and services in order to offer information for people who haven't used them before. Consumers are able to evaluate goods and specific features such as the quality of a product.

They are also able to post and read other customer reviews (Aichner & Jacob, 2015).

The abstract of keeping, gathering, and organizing bookmarks or favourites on the specific website for the purpose of sharing with others is commonly known as **social bookmarking**. Well-known websites and other online resources are indicated by these bookmarks.

Social games, such as card or multiplayer games, are online games that enable or demand socializing between participants.

People who know each other, share similar interests, or want to participate in related activities are connected through **social networks**. Users create their own account and set up a profile, which others can search by entering their complete name, and they can submit photos and videos as well. Companies make use of social media by positioning their brands, educating and supporting existing customers. They also try to attract new customers by developing a corporate presence.

Users can upload and distribute personal, professional, or royalty-free videos, as well as freely watch them, on **video-sharing** services/**platforms**. Plenty of websites allow users to leave comments on certain videos. Companies make use of social media to share advertisements, put on trial new video commercials, and cut their costs in comparison to traditional television advertising campaigns.

Plenty of users create their personal identity or avatar and at the same time are able to enjoy **virtual worlds**, connect with others while concurrently and individually exploring the virtual world while participating in its activities. Unlike in computer games, time does not stop when the user is not signed in. Virtual worlds frequently employ digital currencies, which have a real-world value and enable businesses to sell either virtual or real-world goods (Aichner & Jacob, 2015).

3.2. Social media networks

Social media network is an online platform that helps individuals to connect with others similar to them in the terms of interests, passions, and beliefs. Individuals are increasingly using social networking sites to connect with individuals, companies, businesses, or brands they admire in today's world.

Influencers are an important part of social media networks because they are opinion leaders and they start discussions with other influencers about trendy, new, exciting topics for example places to visit. It is important to mention that some brands are very successful at engaging and connecting with their followers because of their interesting dialogues however others aren't as successful and struggle on social media platforms and they are often misunderstood (Luttrell, 2015).

The rise of social networks, began in in the 1990s with Netscape, there was MySpace in 2004, to the introduction of Facebook and Twitter briefly after, to YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest. It is a linkage for people all over the world with a variety of common interests, that has opened up new opportunities for public relations in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Today, every firm, politician, not-for-profit organization, university, hospital, and over 4 billion citizens of the world interact via social media networks. Public relations practitioners must be familiar with and skilled in the use of each. For example, Facebook can be useful to public relations practitioners because it attracts attention, provides a two-way communication, it has a conversation monitor function, provides internal communication by creating a feeling of community between public relations employees (Seitel, 2017).

When mentioning Facebook it is important to mention Twitter as well. It acts as a media cycle system which circulates news. Twitter provides a massive flow of comments and data for public relations professionals to monitor. It offers valuable content with views, insights, and suggestions that aren't available anywhere else. LinkedIn is also an important social media network to mention for the work of public relations practitioners. LinkedIn's basic idea is to build a "who you know" network of present and previous business associates. It offers various services which can be useful for public relations professionals, such as notes that are used to notify friends and family about upcoming events, job openings, and vendor suggestions. In answer forum, professional counsel is given, and it is suggested that the interaction is treated as if it were a business meeting (Seitel, 2017).

There are numerous platforms and mobile applications available in today's social media world. Already mentioned Facebook and other social networks have become practically omnipresent. Even people who do not have an online account and profile or engage in social media platforms will frequently hear information obtained from such social media sites.

A significant attribute that distinguishes a social network site is the user list that an individual interacts with, which is frequently based on friends, family, business relationships, or even only mutual friends. Originally, social network sites were significant opportunities to meet new individuals, and while this is still possible, many social network sites now restrict users from adding strangers because of the danger they might represent. Although research suggests that much of this political activity reaffirms previous beliefs, mainly because people tend to be friends online with those similar to them. Public content published on social networks frequently enables the environment for social and political perspectives to be showcased (Manning, 2014). When describing social media networks it is important to note that some of them have an ability to endure and some of them almost vanish after a certain amount of time. People are introduced to a new social media platform almost every day, there are hundreds of different sites.

3.3. Measurement of social media's impact and value

The relevance and success of social media are visible in the results of campaigns attained in the mainstream business which is impacted by social media. Generally, related indicators to the campaign are measured and interpreted with up to 5% of a normal public relations expenditure. Companies expect the quantity of effect and benefits to be evaluated by social media and public relations practitioners. Listening or paying attention is one of the most important segments of social media. A company needs to pay full attention and closely listen to its audience in order to understand what is being said about them in the virtual environment. This can lead to gathering a lot of information that is hard to interpret (Lutrell, 2013).

For companies, it's quite difficult to understand what their audience is trying to communicate and according to that to take action. Gathering information from social media allows companies to generate statistical reports and establish plans of action. With this information, company can measure and compare the outcomes of their campaigns.

Measurement of the impact of social media's campaign isn't quite easy to define it is actually a difficult task. There are various terms connected with measuring social media reports.

In the content and sourcing part of the report it is important to define the origin or source of the content to ensure transparency and openness in order to compare more easily for analyzing and interpreting data. This segment focuses on analyzing the information and content of various sources (social media platforms) such as Facebook, Twitter, forums, and services for monitoring (Luttrell, 2015). It includes data collection methods. There are also explored essential measurements in order to comprehend impact, involvement, effect, advocacy, and opinion.

The section which refers to reach and impressions provides a framework for establishing data collecting in social media, allowing for consistent calculation of later metrics and other criteria. The terms "item," "mention," "impressions," and "reach" are an important part of this section (Luttrell, 2015). Engagement and conversation refer to terms that are frequently used by social media professionals however, they aren't specified consistently enough to enable accurate assessment. In this part, terms of engagement and conversation and distinctions among them are given. The types and degrees of engagement vary for each platform, but they can be combined for cross-channel comparing (Jeffrey, 2013).

Considering that not all professionals have expertise in market analysis, segment of opinion and advocacy includes standards and examples for evaluating views, and emotions. In social media strategy key terms 'influencers' and 'influences' are widely applied. Nevertheless, these terms aren't precisely defined. As a result, professionals have established a standard terminology and theoretical framework to help them define "influencers."

It is commonly known that the terms impact and value represent the final goal for every social media and PR campaign attempt. They are frequently mistaken for the term of return-on-investment. This part is committed to describing and measuring the terms of impact and value. It provides professionals information to comprehend differences between the terms impact, value, and return-on-investment (Jeffrey, 2013).

In order to conclude this subchapter it is worth mentioning that an easy-to-understand agreement about social media measurement was suggested, and it includes 3 key categories: programmatic, channel-specific, and business (Bartholomew, 2013). This agreement was suggested for evaluating the success of social media strategy. Programmatic category refers to instantly relating to social media outcomes, channel-specific because they are linked to particular social media platforms. (Luttrell, 2015).

The business category highlights the impact that a campaign or a certain project had on a company.

3.4. Social media ethics

Ethics can be generally described as doing something in the right way. It can be defined as a person's or company's morality which mostly describes what a person or a group of people consider to be good or bad. It refers to how they evaluate circumstances by labeling them as either right or wrong. Any categorization of moral ideals, moral responsibility, or norms that directs a person's or group's activities is referred to as ethics. Ethical standards or values are meant to be leading principles which when applied can lead to positive outcomes (Ariff, 2021).

They are looking for answers of the questions for example, "How should I live?", "How do I accomplish something that is considered as essential which includes knowledge, joy or obtaining appealing goods?", "Should joy be mine or for others?" Some of the moral issues that must be addressed in the realm of social media are the following: "Is it possible that this posting is sharing too much private information?" "Is the information in the posting misleading or false?" " How will this article affect others?" (Barrett-Maitland & Lynch, 2019)

Young people between ages from 8 to 15 present one of the most significant users on social media platforms. They are exploring and trying to understand how to connect with others and determining what moral ideals they will follow. These moral principles will influence how people interact with others. The moral principles that drive people's relationships are typically derived from a moral concept given to them by an individual or a number of people, such as our parents, guardians, religious groups, and instructors, to mention a few (Barrett-Maitland & Lynch, 2019).

Social media users which are over 18 years old must yet decide for themselves how much accountability they will show when utilizing various social media networks. This involves taking into account the influence that a post is going to have on the life of them or others? For users is important to understand that once they create their account on a social media platform, they are entering a group of people where they need to behave in a certain way. They need to be responsible and mature for their age.

People like to share small details about their everyday life on social media at any time of the day. They commonly reveal their movements and the exact spot where are they located at the moment, what they consume, and information about actions that are usually regarded as personal and intimate. They like to express what they enjoy and what they don't, how they feel about a certain topic which became routine. This means that they usually share details about themselves or/and about other people also. Social media generates instant data and makes it accessible to everyone, therefore once an individual shares something on social media he/she can't remove it as it was never published. This should encourage users to consider that there are consequences for their postings. Frequently, posts are published without an individual considering the influence that it might have on another individual or even a group of people, that could potentially be affected by their post (Ariff, 2021).

When mentioning ethics it is important to note why people share on social media, they often share content which is related to a certain cause, content to which they are personally connected with, content that makes them feel like they are involved worldwide, content that defines them as individuals, and content that is mostly for informing and entertaining others (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

Oversharing is one of the biggest ethical challenges for social media. People are used to sharing too much information, too frequently. Individuals like posting interesting and exciting things about themselves so that others are able to see and experience those things as well. However, even though people don't think twice before posting, they also post their location. By marking their locations individuals put themselves in danger of becoming easy to track down. This is a privacy and security problem, however, it presents itself as an ethical problem as well with individuals considering the oversharing of their private information. This can harm one's image, possibly their job position, and the way others perceive them (Writer, 2019).

Behaviour that isn't appropriate for one's business can be badly perceived. Social media users frequently complain that they can not verify content before posting, which can be troubling when the post portrays individuals or businesses in a negative light.

The unverified content is subsequently reposted without hesitation, although it is possible that this content has been deliberately modified, in which case an individual unwittingly contributes to the discrediting of others.

In the case, that content isn't modified it could still portray an individual or a certain subject negatively which should raise red flags about is it appropriate to post it which is actually the core concept of moral behavior (Barrett-Maitland & Lynch, 2019).

4. IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PUBLIC RELATIONS

The world of communication is rapidly evolving in an online direction (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Those that grasp this evolution will communicate more efficiently than others. Public relations professionals are in the business of connecting with the general public, thus they must be aware of the changes in order to communicate efficiently. Especially with the rapid growth of social media, however, it is challenging for these experts, as well as the institutions that train future professionals, to stay updated.

Public relations professionals used to be in charge of organizing material and then sending it to the media with expecting it to print. Practitioners are still organizing the material however, they are able to release it by themselves by social media. Practitioners can still provide material to traditional media, but they can also communicate with the public directly, monitor their responses, and respond accordingly. Social media platforms as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook are among the new technologies that are adopted by PR professionals. The adoption of social media is accelerating at a rapid pace. In the past, blogs were the most common forms of communication among PR professionals, today social network platforms are the most popular form of communication (Awofadeju & Ewuola, 2019).

Social media is now considered an essential component of public relations efforts. According to the research, social media helps a corporation become more human. Social media gives a firm a face since individuals want to communicate with other people. As a result, businesses are turning to social media to humanize their interactions with stakeholders. Businesses that use social media are more likely to bridge the social divide between themselves and their customers. Social media creates an opening for two-way communication. The usage of social media is increasing among organizations around the world, prompting the desire to employ social media as a strategy for strengthening public relations in government.

Individuals have become more adaptable as a result of social media. People spend a lot of time on social networks, their use of social media has increased in general. Individuals are aware of the impact of social media on public relations. The key point that has been made is that public relations play a significant role in organizational operations. The biggest impact of social media on public relations is seen on the organizational level (Wang, 2015).

The PR Pyramid plays a significant role in social media relations, as seen by the adoption of social media as a public relations tool. The ability of PR practitioners to develop more effective relationships is the most important component of social media. Social media may be used to improve public relations within an organization's structure (Komodromas, 2014).

Public relations specialists may use social media to develop new contacts across a broader area in a way that has never been available before. Professionals can establish continuing, high-quality interactions with influencers, journalists, clients, and partners through social media, regardless of where they are. The Web 2.0 social media "put the public back in public relations" (Breakenridge, 2008). Which explains the level of impact that social media has on public relations. Social media is altering public relations and redefining it in new socially engaged ways.

Most traditional communication methods are being phased out, powerful new social media tools provide extraordinary new potential. Traditional ways of communication will not reach a large number of people, much less persuade them to make them do anything. (Breakenridge, 2012). Three themes are currently driving important trends in public relations and new media: public involvement, search, and social networking (Rubel, 2009).

4.1. Public relations on the Internet

Public relations as a field and profession has evolved dramatically over time. As a discipline that primarily deals with how humans interact, it must be open to and responsive to continuing technology advancements. The Internet has opened a new era of communication by providing a voice to individuals who didn't have it before. This has opened up a whole new range of possibilities for businesses and individuals that were previously unimaginable in the age of traditional media. These are still important in influencing public opinion, however, the entire world is shifting to the online world to search for information. A public relations practitioner who doesn't effectively communicate with the online community will not be able to successfully shape and reach the desired public image (IPR.org.uk, 2020).

The example of "anti-campaigns" demonstrates why businesses and individuals who wish to be successful in today's world cannot afford not to use Internet public relations. These can be an unintentional occurrence or a well-thought-out plot of immoral competition.

Negative campaigning, regardless of who is behind it or why may have a catastrophic effect on a company's or individual's public image. However, the threat of unfavorable publicity isn't the only reason why Internet PR is becoming more important. The Internet has a significant impact on people's opinions and decisions, particularly when they are unsure. Which explains why is it important for public relations practitioners to use it (IPR.org.uk, 2020).

Public relations on the Internet contribute to the overall goals of public relations by assisting in the maintenance of long-term relationships between a business and its audiences (Petrovici, 2014). The primary component of communication known as "the new PR" has a number of advantages. The audience has the opportunity to participate with the organization and receive quick responses through online public relations, allowing for successful and mutually beneficial contact. Other prominent advantages that make a difference include knowing the audience and cheaper costs. The precision and clarity of messages is a significant benefit of adopting Internet public relations.

Unlike traditional public relations, which uses mass media to communicate with the public, potentially distorting the message, online public relations uses a web page to inform the public, with the benefit of publishing the information correctly and reducing the potential for interference during communication (Haig, 2000). Building strong and mutual benefits between a company and its numerous publics is the goal of Internet public relations. Public relations on the Internet are the art of maintaining and solidifying an organization's online reputation (Haig, 2000). Interactivity and information to the publics, dialogic communication, and new technology are all part of the public relations on the Internet. With the use of the Internet, monologue became dialogue (Breakenridge, 2008).

A public relations firm that fails to engage successfully with the online community will be unable to shape and sustain the intended public image. Public relations professionals had practically no competition in the period of traditional media, the openness and transparency of the Internet has pushed them into competition with the entire world. The threat of the internet to traditional media has become a lifestyle transition for the majority of people. Since public relations is so reliant on communication, it must adapt to the public's hunger for media, which is rapidly becoming online-based.

Public relations on the Internet, or the online public relations, present a new way of forming and building relationships, communicating and interacting.

A two-way online communication presents a strategy for public relations practitioners to build relationships between organization and its publics. The dialogue method emphasizes reciprocity and common understanding, it defines open and consensual communication between organization and the publics. This process of developing whole new approaches to connections and interactions allows public relations practitioners to change the way they communicate with the publics (Petrovici, 2014).

4.2. Benefits and weaknesses of social media for public relations

Without a question, social media is a modern creation that reached widespread popularity. This happened as a result of the public's support (Al Jenaibi, 2013). Bringing all types of social groups together in one place and allowing them to engage is a huge step forward. There are numerous discussions about the benefits and weaknesses of social media, as well as what they can accomplish for individuals, businesses, and institutions. In the following are described the most essential benefits and weaknesses of social media networks.

The first major benefit is the low cost. Since people use social media for both personal and commercial purposes, the PR department must connect or be in contact with users in an efficient and cost-effective manner (BinShaikh, 2016). By using social networks, PR practitioner may increase the success of the PR campaign and promotion techniques (Al-Jenaibi, 2014). It informs the company about the vast array of preferences and dislikes. Therefore, it is useful to improve the business of the company.

Traditional media can be too expensive, especially for small companies. Most social media networks, on the other hand, are completely free to use, with the only cost to businesses being the time spent updating accounts and connecting with the public or contacts. The low cost of accessing social media makes it especially beneficial to small companies which can not afford the use of traditional media.

Organizations or institutions can cut their costs by using social media to develop and share promotional material like articles, audio, and videos, whereas traditional media would charge a high price for publishings in order to appear in the press, radio, or on TV.

PR practitioners can have the opportunity to communicate with the audience on a personal and professional level and to gain their trust which builds credibility. However, it is important not to be too persuasive therefore it is important not to approach them too excessively (BinShaikh, 2016).

Social media is also a great approach for the Public Relations Department to obtain information about the needs and wants of the company's target audience, as well as to address any business issues that may arise. The most effective strategy to defend, build, and improve an organization's or institution's reputation and credibility is through social media.

The potential for interesting links is high. The PR department is making use of social media sites and doing everything they can to connect with companies' audiences in order to build a network of relationships. If a company or organization has a new feature or information, they can simply publish it on these social media sites with some links to define what they published which can provide firms or institutions strength. As long as the public relations department provides and receives replies, it will most likely continue to work with institutions or organizations. These connections will undoubtedly be beneficial for the future (BinShaikh, 2016).

However, there are some weaknesses or disadvantages of social media for public relations. When referring to social media in general there is a shortage of anonymity, everything is transparent such as an individual's name, address, age, and gender, as well as a variety of other details that an individual might doesn't want to share with others. Even though many people advise caution, no one can be assured at any time.
As long as others know who a certain individual is they will be able to figure out how to access him/her. This way if there is a potential problem an individual can approach a PR practitioner as well because of transparency and the available name, which can be potentially dangerous for them.

In both personal and economic contexts, there is a risk of a lack of security. Many websites have implemented particular precautions to minimize harassment, cybercrime stalking, online frauds, and identity theft to a bare minimum, but an individual still can't be 100% guaranteed. This can potentially harm the work of PR practitioners and take plenty of their time.

Many important social aspects of the new technology and social media have been overlooked by public relations scholars, such as privacy, personal and professional risks, economic, physical, and psychological harms to stakeholders, creating user-friendly, convivial interfaces, and the democracy and social capital building potential of new technologies (Kent, 2010). Social media and the Internet in general are characterized more by fragmentation than integration.

Since PR professionals' job is to build strong relationships it isn't a positive aspect for them.

With the introduction of social media, genuine social interaction among human beings is declining. Isolated collaboration technology will become the norm for professionals. The pretentiousness of the Internet and social media is making people increasingly prejudiced and isolating them from the views of others. Social media's democratizing potential becomes more diluted and less valuable as more people use it.

People will be able to effortlessly interact with fellow members of their communities thanks to location and context data. Social media has changed and continues to change people's notion of what "friends" are (Kent, 2010).

4.3. Usage of social media tools for public relations

PR practitioners were considered as late adopters" in terms of communication technology acceptance, based on new research they are now more on a level with other industries in terms of online tool utilization. A number of public relations practitioners believe that social media has made their jobs easier by allowing information to reach a wider audience more quickly. Public relations professionals can use social media to reach out to their audiences and engage them in conversation, as well as build media interactions (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008).

Individuals are accustomed to and expect companies to establish a Facebook page, a Twitter account, upload movies to YouTube, and include blogs on their Web sites. These tools provide a one-of-a-kind way for a company to broadcast its message to the blogosphere and receive a real-time responses from those who are interested in the firm's products or services. They can also be used to improve a company's web profile and gain media attention. Using these tools companies appear more approachable.

Webinars, or online video seminars, are a way for businesses to reach out to their audience and media outlets with demos and lectures on new trends and concepts that their customers are interested in learning more about. The Public Relations Society of America regularly records audio and video conversations with industry professionals about the latest trends and techniques for public relations practitioners through webinars and podcasting. The biggest television news networks, NPR, and blogs often make podcasts from their news content, which may be viewed or listened to at any time by their followers (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008).

Intranets are computer-based systems for interacting internally with employees and other insiders, whereas extranets are similar processes for communicating with external audiences such as investors, customers, community and governmental leaders, and so on. In addition to these, internet businesses and organizations have a special section on their websites dedicated to the media. This involves directing reporters to sources of information, position statements, activity calendars, press release archives, speeches, government filings, and corporate and executive background material in the case of breaking news (Lattimore & Baskin, 2013).

Based on research, the most used social media tool by PR practitioners is Intranet and Youtube. They also use videoconferencing, social networking sites as Facebook, forums, blogs, and so on. Organizations of all kinds are increasingly incorporating social media tools into their communication strategy, both when planning online activities and when analyzing the effects of these activities.

PR practitioners use social media platforms (Facebook) to keep an eye on possible crises or to develop two-way communication with the organization's main public. *"They emphasize the importance of reputation and relationships with stakeholders in PR practitioners' strategic plans, and social media tools are a way to achieve this"* (Komodromas, 2014, p. 8).

4.4. The future of public relations and social media

When social media and public relations combined, communication techniques progressed, new practices, and your functions and responsibilities shifted. Communication is something that is out of control. It is possible to direct and shape experiences, which necessitates the acceptance of knowledge, skills, and practices that prepare PR practitioners for new challenges. Companies must take practical actions to manage public conversations and a variety of communication touchpoints through social media participation. It is important to be a proactive and strategic component of the pragmatic approach and process as a PR practitioner (Breakenridge, 2012).

There are plenty of PR and social media predictions out there. The new continual is change. People's behavior and technology that allows how people desire to be entertained, educated, informed, acknowledged, and linked to others who share similar hobbies are the foundations for PR predictions in the coming years.

Technology advances continuously allowing individuals to feel even more connected than before. In the terms of media- news, information, entertainment, and other content must be delivered in a tailored and more personalized manner. Because of the PR line of work, it is important to stay in touch with the media and understand how news, information, and entertainment are received (Breakenridge, 2012).

The objective of the PR professional is to captivate attention through meaningful experiences and to ensure that firm communications reach the public and are seen as highly relevant. Based on research, companies are realizing the importance of public relations work and they need more experienced PR professionals to safeguard the company's credibility and reputation.

For the future of public relations, it's time to educate, grow, and deliver effect based on the new practices by taking the next steps. Public relations as a term is redefined with the impact of social media because it's increasing expansion changed the way public relations work.

The public relations sector is being reinvented and propelled forward by social media, which is also raising awareness of the growing need for higher-level PR education. Internally, senior leaders are discovering how social media may help them find answers to their problems and develop a stronger company. The analytic-friendly character of social media will be carried over to public relations. As public relations professionals employ data analytics to inform future efforts and improve current ones, it will be even more data-driven. Analytic tools will play a significantly larger role in public relations. Professionals who are taught how to use them efficiently will be required by the sector. Public relations practitioners will be able to provide a more accurate assessment of the performance of their campaigns if they use the right tools (Breakenridge, 2012).

Because of the growing popularity of visual material, public relations will have to adjust not only to a new type of content but also to a new structure for effectively communicating company messaging. AR/VR, 360 videos will become a natural tool for PR practitioners. Companies may communicate with audiences more directly on social media by using visual material (Schaffer, 2021).

The way the public and PR professionals utilize social media has also been affected by ephemeral material or content that only exists for a brief period of time.

Snapchat material has the appearance of exclusivity due to its blink-and-you'll-miss-it nature, whereas targeted location-based content appears to be relevant to individual audiences.

Companies have embraced Snapchat's platform to engage with audiences with great success. This is just going to improve as the application's features expand. Because Snapchat is known for its highly personalized and in-the-moment content, public relations will have to adapt to this platform.

Social media press releases are already used in combination with traditional press releases, but they may someday replace them entirely. Exactly that was the situation with the Canadian government, which decided to use social media press releases instead of the traditional. The idea behind a social media news release is that the material is easily shared and takes advantage of the online's format's connecting, multimedia, and social media features. Instead of preserving one-way communication channels, social media press releases enable a two-way parallel discussion with the publics (Schaffer, 2021).

5. RESEARCH OF SOCIAL MEDIA'S IMPACT ON PUBLIC RELATIONS IN CROATIA

In the following chapter it is important to explore what kind of impact social media has on public relations agencies and practitioners in Croatia. There is an emphasis on researching the role that social media plays in the work of Croatian public relations.

5.1. Defining research problem and goals

In order to define the research problem and goals it is important to explore the usage of social media by the Croatian public relations agencies and practitioner in order to come to conclusions if they achieved successful outcomes. It is necessary to observe what is PR practitioners opinion about social media, is it positive or negative, what kind of communication did it impact. Also the problem of the research focuses on the relationship between traditional media and the "new" social media", the reach that is possible with the use of social media tools. The application of the social media is at a very fast rate, and there aren't many studies based on Croatian public relations agencies and practitioners with the relation to the social media. Research question: Is social media impacting the work of public agencies and practitioners more than traditional media?

At the moment, the social media is considered as an integral part of public relations, therefore it is important to explore is that the case in Croatia as well. The research goal of the study is to find out whether social media improved the work of Croatian public relations agencies and practitioners. Also it is important to explore the important elements or factors of social media for public relations. As it was mentioned in the thesis, social media's advantage lies in the cheap way of communicating with the publics, therefore there is also focus on exploring whether Croatian PR consider it as well. The advancement of social media has considerably empowered a wide range of strategic publics by providing them with dynamic new media, which PR practitioners are now adopting to effectively communicate with a variety of internal and external audiences. Focus is also on researching whether this is the case for Croatian public relations or not.

5.2. Research sample

Since it wasn't an option to take too much time from PR agencies and practitioners in Croatia, telephone survey was the best and most efficient way to contact them. It took around 4 minutes to gather answers per respondent through telephone survey. However, for respondents that weren't able to talk at the moment the call occured, the option of sending an e-mail which consisted of survey questions was sent to them. In order to provide their answers at any moment of the day which was suitable for them. Almost every public relations agency in Croatia was contacted in order to reach the number of 30 respondents for the survey. The survey was anonymous which was explained to the respondents both on the phone and for the ones which decided to complete it by an e-mail. This was explained to them in order to give honest answers and also to provide answers to questions about their age and gender. In this empirical research, survey was distributed to around 30 respondents. However, 25 responses were gathered at the end. 19 of respondents were female and 6 were male, which equals to 76% of female respondents and 24% of male. Most of the respondents aged was between 35-44, 40% of them or 10 respondents, and 36% of the respondents aged was between 25-34 or 9 respondents. Respondents aged between 45-54 equaled to 20% or 5 respondents and only 4% of respondents aged between 18-24 which equals to only one respondent.

5.3. Research methodology

As a part of empirical research, in this thesis telephone survey was carried out. Telephone survey was conducted from June 15th till June 31th 2021. It contained 14 questions. For the needs of the research, the method of gathering primary data was used. This method was used in order to get data that wasn't gathered in the past, since not many studies were conducted regarding this topic. In the telephone survey, short closed-end questions with either one or mutliple answers were used. Also, there were range questions asking do respondents agree with the certain statement in the form of: Strongly agree, Agree, Uncertain, Disagree, Strongly disagree.

5.4. Research results, analysis and data interpretation

Respondents volountarily participated in the telephone survey. Most of them firstly asked what is the topic of the survey in order to figure out are they edaquate enough to provide answers. First two questions were of demographic nature, and the rest of the questions focused on the topic of the research. In the following, the results are presented along with the analysis and interpretation of them.

Graph 1 Social media's impact on public relations types of communication
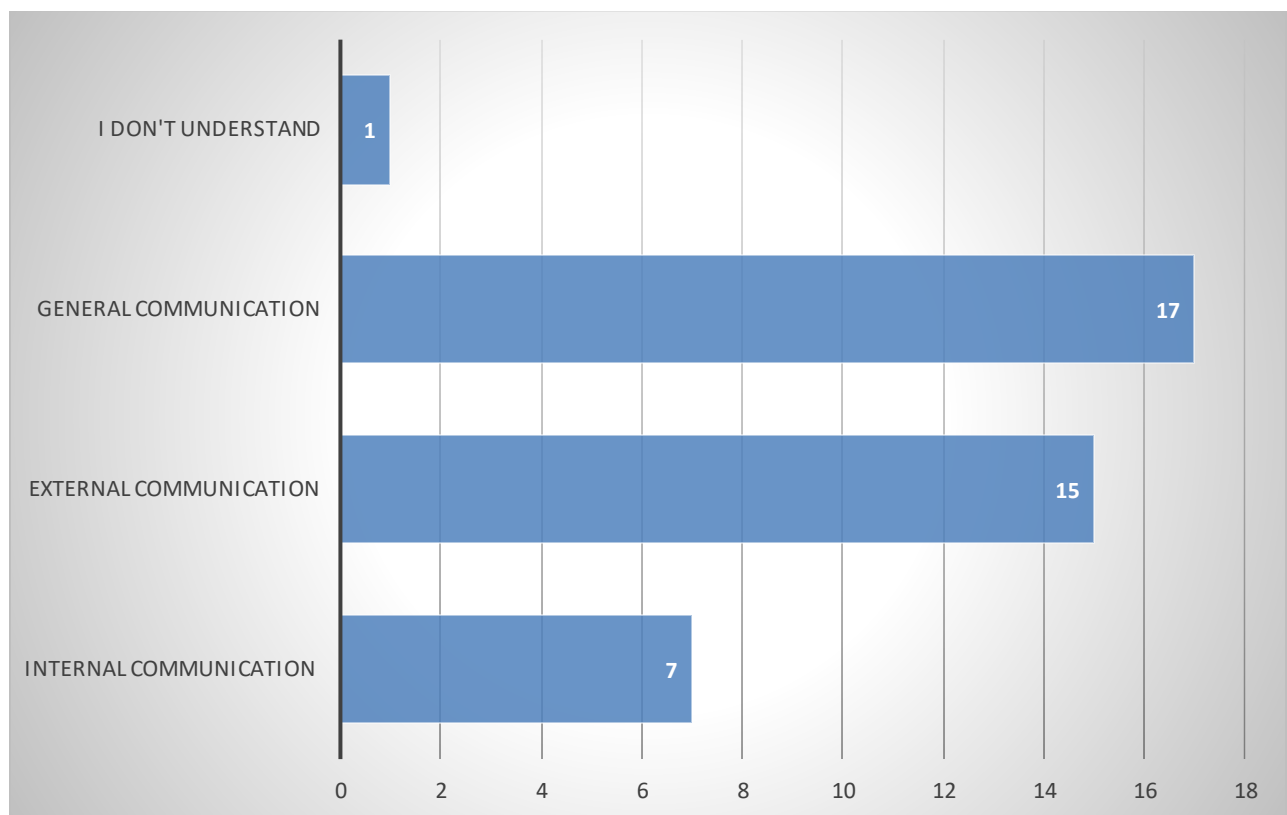

In the first question it is examined on which type of communication social media impacted the most. As it is presented on the graph, this is a multiple answers type of question. Most of the respondents (68%) believe that social media mostly impacted general and external communication, 17 of them picked general communication. Also, majority of respondents picked external communication (60%) which equals to 15 respondents. Only 28% believe that it mostly impacted internal communication, it equals to only 7 respondents.

The following question examines do social media and traditional media complement each other. For the following one answer type of question, respondents mostly agree that traditional and social media complement each other 18 of them. 6 respondents strongly agree, and only 1 respondent doesn't agree.

Next question examines if social media improved public relations practice. This question confirms that respondents agree that social media improved practices of public relations (76%), 19 of them. However, 16% of them weren't certain about this statement which equals to 4 respondents.

Graph 2 Objectives that improved the achievement of public relations that were enhanced by the use of social media
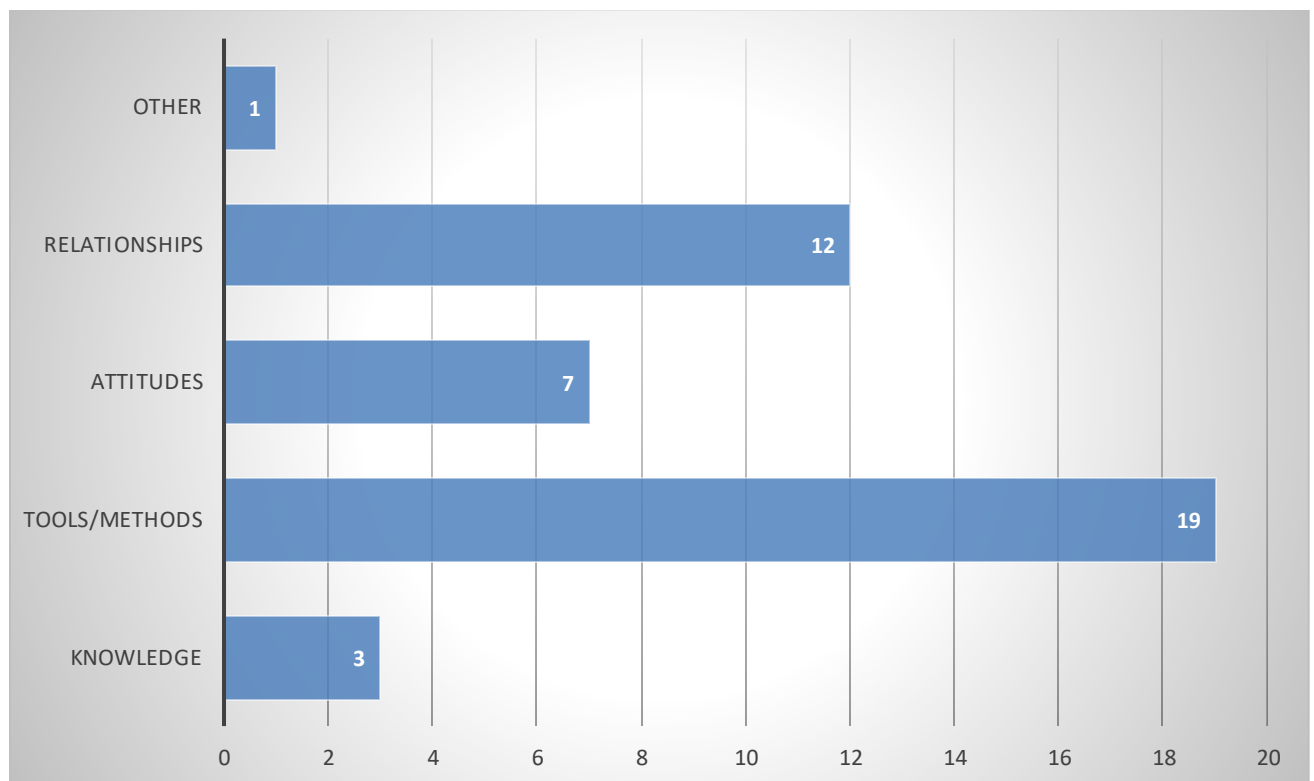
This is a multiple answers kind of question, and most of the respondents believe that tools/methods mostly were most enhanced in achieving public relations goals (76%) 19 of them. 48% respondents belives that relationships are the most enhanced objectives, 12 of them. 28% respondents believes that attitude was most enhanced, 7 of them.

Graph 3 Factors that determine the advantage of social media tools used in public relations practice
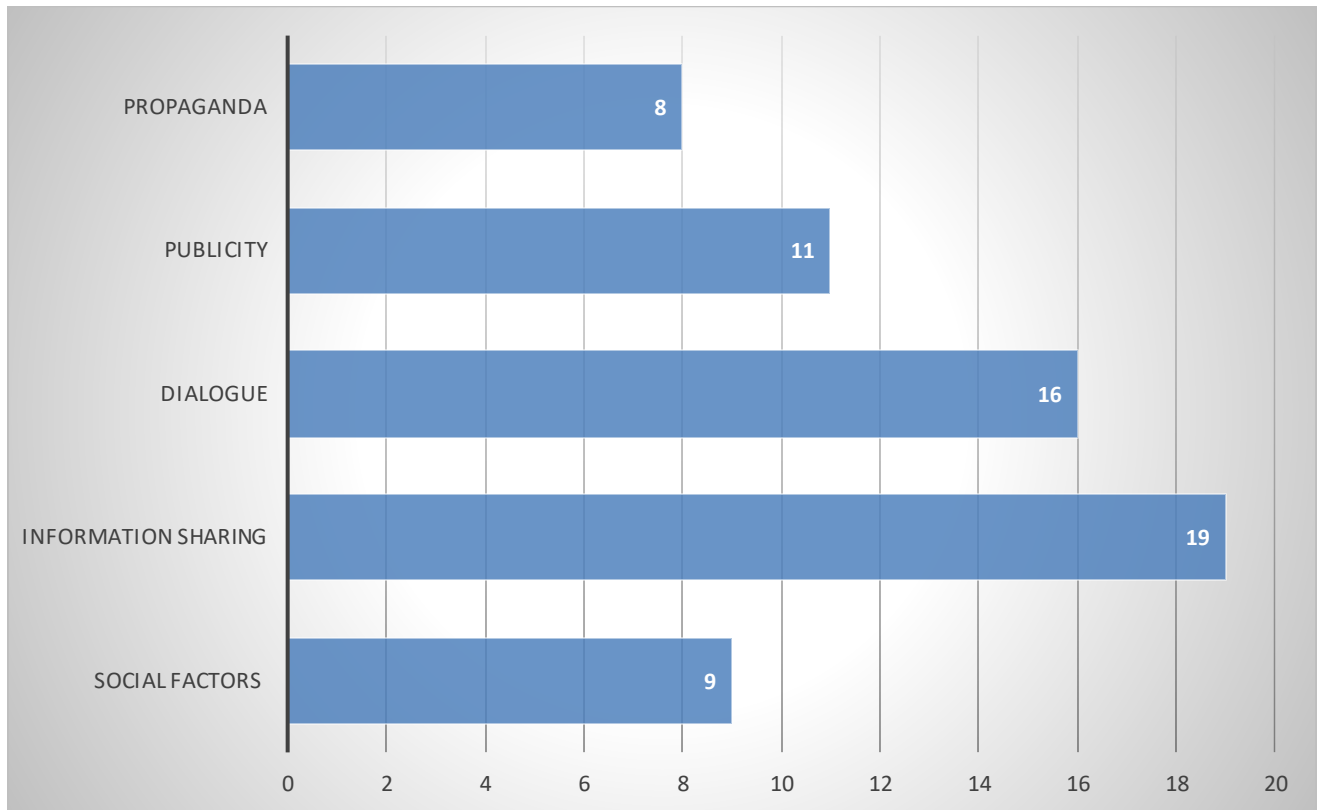
A multiple answers type of question, in which most of the respondents picked information sharing as the most important favor which determine the advantage of social media tools for public relations practice (76%) 19 of them. However, 64% of them chose dialogue, which equals to 16 respondents. It is also important to mention publicity (44%) picked by 11 respondents.

The following question examines do social media influence traditional mainstream media. This is a one answer type of question, most of the respondents agree that social media influences traditional mainstream media (60%), 15 respondents. 36% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement which is 9 respodents.

In the next question it is examined do traditional mainstream media influence social media. In this one-answer type of question, most of the respondents agree that traditional media influences social media (40%), 10 respondents. However, 32% disagree with the statement which equals to 8 respondents. This answers provides divided opinion about the stated.

For the question "Is social media more accurate than traditional mainstream media?" 36% of the respondents disagree that social media is more accurate than traditional mainstream media which equals to 9 respondents. 32% of the respondents isn't certain about this statement, which is 8 respondents. Finally, 16% of the respondents strongly disagrees, which equates to 4 respondents. This chart indicates that mostly respondents either disagrees or strongly disagrees with the stated.

The following question states that social media advocates transparent and ethical culture. Both 44% of the respondents- 11 of them disagrees that social media advocates transparent and ethical culture and 44%- of the respondents- 11 of them isn't certain. Only 8% of the respondents agrees, which equates to 2 respondents.

In the next question it is examined does social media offers the organization a cheaper way to develop relationships with the publics. Based on the answers, most of the respondents agrees that social media provides a cheaper way for public agencies and practitioners to develop relationships with the publics (44%), 11 respondents. 24% of the respondents disagrees with the stated, which equals to 6 respondents.

Subsequently, respondents are asked does social media affects corporate and organizational transparency mostly respondents agree that social media actually affects their corporate and organizational transparency (64%), 16 of them. However, 28% of them isn't certain which is 7 respondents.

Finally, in the last question respondents are asked is social media a more reliable source of information than traditional mainstream media. More than a half of the respondents disagrees that social media is a more reliable source of information than traditional mainstream media (52%), 13 respondents. However, interestingly 20% of the respondents strongly disagrees with the stated which is equal to 5 respondents.

5.5. Discussion

Based on findings, the majority of respondents believed that social media has had a significant and positive impact on how public relations practitioners communicate, as well as how media organizations interact in general. Also, respondents believe that it significantly impacted the way that they communicate with their clients, and publics externally not as much the way that employees interact.

Majority of the respondents believe that traditional and social media compliment each other which means that there is a connection between them and not a conflict. The most important finding of the study is that based on responses, social media improves public relations practice. This indicates that respondents view social media positively. Social media make it easier for public relations practitioners to explain something to people which may not be clear to them in a simple and faster way.

The use of social media, according to the respondents, has improved the achievement of public relations objectives, first by influencing public relations tools and methods, then relationships or interactions with publics, and lastly the attitude of individuals in public relations practice. With the use of social media, information on new advances in public relations techniques and procedures that are not yet widely recognized can be gained efficiently and in a simple manner. For public relations practitioners, social media enhanced the relationships with people. Using social media made interactions between organizations and their publics quicker, easier, less expensive and reliable. It made it easier for public practitioners to have good relationships with people and also to maintain them.

When mentioning factors of social media tools for public relations practice information sharing is the most important one, dialogue is very important for respondents as well and publicity also. As the most important factor social media provides for the transfer of information from one department to another inside an organization, as well as the sharing of information between companies and individuals. Social media is often used for dialogue, video sharing platforms which provide the ability to have a live interaction between participants is also an important factor for the work of public relations practitioners.

The following finding of the survey is that social media in fact do impact traditional media, this indicates the importance of social media in general today and that they became as important as traditional media since they have the power to impact traditional media. Social media is more adaptive than traditional media, this means that after something is published it can be changed which is not the case for the traditional media which is more permanent. Also social media is instant, while traditional media takes more time.

However, the majority of respondents agreed that traditional media impacts social media as well. Although, based on the findings, the impact of social media on traditional media is stronger than the impact of traditional media on social media.

The following finding of the study is that social media aren't more precise than traditional media, which indicates that PR practitioners still believe that communication through traditional media is far more precise and accurate.

The next finding of the study is that social media offers a cheaper way of developing relationships and interactions of PR practitioners and agencies with the publics. This is due to low costs of maintaining social media. Based on the responses regarding the advocacy of social media for transparency and ethical culture, respondents mostly disagre, however, the same number of respondents isn't certain. Since it isn't easy to measure or monitor material that is generated on social media it is easily regarded as unreliable, incorrect, not credible and there are concerns regarding privacy. It is evident that the respondents which aren't certain about the transparency and ethical culture of social media have their doubts about social media. The last finding is that social media isn't a more reliable source than traditional media which is accordant to the fact that social media isn't more accurate than traditional media.

Based on everything mentioned, the impact of social media on public relations is significant, it became very important for the practice and every day activities of the public relations agencies and practitioners in Croatia. Social media provides the ability to interact with a significant number of people at the same time, which wasn't the case in the past with the traditional media.

The next studies should focus more on which social media platforms are PR practitioners and agencies using in order to see which of them play the most important role for their practice. How much do they use social media on a regular basis for their practice, how to raise credibility using social media. Also it is recommended to get responses from more practitioners and PR agencies and to conduct more in-depth survey. Since respondents in this study were busy and extremely hard to access, didn't have enough time to answer more questions, it was decided to present them 14 questions maximum, however, if possible it is recommended to obtain more responses.

It is important to further research the relationship between social media and public relations. This refers to the public relations practitioners' ability to keep up with the social media which is always changing, new technologies and controlling vulnerable social media information which should be an important subject of the following research. Especially since respondents indicated their distrust in the transparency and ethical culture of social media. The usefulness and effectiveness of social media for communicating could be further researched.

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude this thesis, it is important to mention the essence of it and the most important topics which are included. Therefore, firstly the focus is on public relations which is defined as a process and a function of communicating between organizations and the publics while building relationships and interactions. Many aspects influenced the development of public relations, however, the most important one is globalization which made people more connected and therefore made communication easier. Since communication is the most integral part of public relations it changed and improved its practice. To understand the process of public relations most importantly is to define its steps which consist of research, planning, action, and communication and at the end there is evaluation. Any of the steps shouldn't be skipped. The publics of the public relations firstly are audience or people with common characteristics. Public relations communicate with the publics through various sorts of media such as paid media, new and earned media. In the thesis, the term traditional media is described and its great significance, however, it was more important in the past than it is in today's digital world. The practice of public relations is based defined with the term of public affairs. It is important to establish public policy links of organizations. It is described in the terms of businesses and non-profit organizations.

Social media is defined in the thesis as a channel for two-way communication and they help people to easily connect. It is very popular and its significance is growing every day more and more. There are various types of social media explained for a better understanding of the term. The term of social networks is one type of social media that has a major significance for people's everyday lives. Which is the reason that a chapter is fully dedicated to them. Measuring the impact of social media is through what people have to say. Social media can be measured through content and sourcing, their reach and impressions, engagement, opinion, influence, or the effect that it has on the publics, impact, and value which represents.

The term ethics is also described in general as an individual's proper behaviour and actions, morality, doing something positively or negatively. For people on social media, ethics will influence how individuals will communicate with others online, oversharing is the biggest concern in the terms of social media ethics.

Furthermore, the impact of social media on public relations is very strong. It became an integral part of public relations practice, humanizes companies, it provides two-way communication, strengthening government relations and so on. Public relations on the Internet means that, in comparison with the past public relations, shifted their work of handling relationships with companies and public online in the digital environment. There are plenty of advantages and disadvantages of social media, it is cheap, fast, effective, on the other hand, no anonymity, no security, declining social interactions, and so on. Usage of social media is described in the terms of its tools, social media platforms, webinars, Intranet, videoconferencing, forums, and so on. For the future of social media and public relations, the most focus will be on AR/VR, ephemeral exclusivity content, social media press releases. All of the mentioned will play a possible major role in how public relations use social media in the future.

The research part of the thesis has been described in detail, however, to mention the most important aspects of it, it focuses on opinions of Croatian public relations agencies and practitioners on social media's impact and the role that it plays for public relations practice. Their opinion is mostly positive towards social media and they believe that it greatly impacted public relations. Based on the responses, social media indeed is impacting the work of public relations agencies and practitioners more than traditional media today. However, traditional media shouldn't be completely overlooked and it still represents an important part of the public relations work in Croatia.

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LIST OF GRAPHS

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3. WORK EXPERIENCE

2017 – now

- Private renter of summer rental apartments in Njivice, Croatia
- Arranging and renting of apartments on various booking sites, as well as arranging cleaning and maintenance

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- G.I.F. d.o.o. real estate construction company, engineering and related technical consultancy in Njivice, Croatia
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3. EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

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4. TECHNICAL AND OTHER SKILLS

- Computer skills- Microsoft Office- Word and Excel
- Basic Photoshop skills
- Driving license B category
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