PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT BY GOVERNMENT THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: A PUBLIC'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Public relations is the practice of managing the spread of information between an individual or an organization, and the public. It involves gaining exposure to audiences using topics of public interest or news which does not require direct payment, rather than advertising. Government is the ruling system or a group of people who manages an organized community or state. In Malaysia, a government consists of the legislature, executive, and judiciary body. Each governing body has its own ministries chaired by ministers. Effectiveness is the ability to produce the result that is wanted or intended. While the crisis is an unstable state or whenever problems occur, and decisions need to be made. Social media is wide and has no boundaries. Information spread so quickly whether if it is true or false. A public relations practitioner functions to establish and maintain mutual benefit between an organization and the public. A public relations officer has to deal with the stakeholders; community, employees, or internal public, financial institutions, media relations, and public affairs, in order to keep the good image and reputation on the public eyes. The social media handling has become one of the responsibilities now. The purpose of this research is to find out the effectiveness of the government's social media accounts from the public's perspective.

Keywords: Public Relations, Government, Effectiveness, Crisis, Social Media.

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Introduction

The public relations roles started off with mainstream media such as posters, newspapers and other printed media. As time goes by, the evolution of the media itself has brought changes to the practice, thus varies the responsibilities as the development continues. Just like the education, evolvement and changes are possibly seen as never ending. The social media had just been widely used in the recent years, and our country can still be considered as newly exposed to it. These are no longer the days when organizations can be on track with the 10-

year strategic plan they made (K. T., 2007), and it is our responsibility to make sure that the team is always prepared.

Public relation is the relationship between the public and an organization or even a famous person. It has been around for over 100 years now, and Edward Bernays was believed to have invented the public relations profession in the year 1920s, while some claim it to be Ivy Lee. Back then, most of the audience were illiterate. Therefore, public relations were done by having public speeches, and by spreading images, such as posters. Even when the printed media was introduced, most of them were still illiterate, thus it did not get that much if attention. A public relations practitioner is the person who is responsible for all these tasks.

Crisis is a Latin originated word which means an unstable state or whenever problems occur, and decisions needs to be made. Managing crisis generally means the measures taken by organizations in dealing with urgency and tense of their working environment, while organizational crisis means any complications and difficulties upon reaching their organizational goals. In public relations, crisis would always be related to the bad image of the involved organization, or even public figures.

Effectiveness is the ability to produce the result that is wanted or intended. In the research context, the effectiveness is the ability to respond to conflicts occurring online. For example, when a crisis happens, or even a rumor has been spread on the social media about a particular organization, it is the public relations officer's duty to counter and respond to it, to distinguish the bad image within the society.

Social media is a new form of communication channel which has been centralized for community based input, content-sharing, where users create online communities to have collaboration on ideas, contents, or even information. The World Wide Web was discovered in 1991 when the hypertext technology was connected to the Internet by Tim Berners-Lee, which formed the new type of networked communication (Dijck, J., 2013). However, the social media we use now, only started after the Web 2.0 was discovered in 1999, only to be made popular by Tim O'Reilly and Dale Doughtery (Dijck, J., 2013). It ables us to connect and interact on social media.

"Social networking has become daily practice in some user's lives" (Edosomwan, 2011, p. 1). This research entitled "The Effectiveness of Public Relations Managing Crisis through Social Media" is aiming to expose the challenges had by the public relations practitioners in handling the crisis on social media, also to investigate the effectiveness of public relations practitioners managing crisis through social media.

Problem Statement
The transition from the old traditional, adverts and printed mainstream media, to new media. Practitioners would have to cope with the changes, patterns, styles, and trend, in order to make it sell for their organization, and it would not be easy. The audiences of the social media are variety; from different demographics, age, and backgrounds. Their level of perception is different. The way they interpret and perceive certain information they obtain, might also be contradicted. Therefore, it is widely, uncontrolled.

The systems that have been developed to these more straight-forward content types are leading the way in online audience metrics – but the complexity of news consumption means that these metrics do not yet meet the needs of scholars interested in better understanding how news consumption takes place, how it flows in society, and the influences of news on opinion (Ofcom., 2014)

The widespread and usage of social media in Malaysia is rather new in the recent years. This leads to a new responsibility for the public relations practitioners as the social media acts as a gate of communication to anywhere in the world. The coverage is wide, almost limitless. Therefore, it is quite of a challenge for the practitioners, as the manageability is unknown, with many possible outcomes. This means that the government sector in our country is still trying to adapt and get along with this change in communication, as it (communication) is the most important medium between the government and their public. This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of the government's social media accounts from the public's perspective.

Practitioners are expected to keep track with the rapidness of social media, daily. The trends, patterns, and even detect the crisis which might have been creeping among the netizen about their organization, or in the research's context, the government.

Social media fails are as equal as public relations fail towards any organization. An example of a social media fail dealt by practitioners are, the JP Morgan Chase's cancellation of Twitter Q&A session on 13 November 2013 as the post became a complaint department for dissatisfied customers (Hausmann, V., 2014).

Another example was when McDonald's plan on making #McDStories as hashtag turned into bashtag instead when customers shared their horrific experiences related to McDonald's. As result to that, McDonald's decided to pull the campaign within just 2 hours.

Research Objective
1. To find out if the public are aware of important announcements made by the government through social media

Research Question
1. Are the public aware of the existence of the government's social media accounts?
2. Are the public aware of important announcements made by the government through social media?
3. Are these government social media accounts responsive?

Significance of Study
As stated in the problem statement, the main problem for this research to solve is that the government sector in our country is still new on social media crisis handling. We are still trying to adapt and get along with this change in communication, creeping into the 4th industrial revolution in Asia.

The research questions in this study lurks into problems such as the inactivity of the government's social media in terms of responses and replies, and if the public is aware of these accounts. This is because, this study is focusing on the public's perspectives. Therefore, the population or informants could be among the heavy users of social media, believed to be teenagers, young adults, and public relations practitioners (A. S., & M. A. (2018, March 1).

Other than that, there were not many previous studies on topics of such. Therefore, the significance of this study is that it is hoped to be a helpful guideline for practitioners in future to overcome crises on social media.

In the United States, the government had started using the social media to discuss on governmental matters. "After President Obama's historic speech on Middle East policy, the White House turned to Twitter to discuss it" (Howard, A. B. (2011, August 9).

Limitations of Study

Some of the limitations in completing this study are, there are limited source of previous researches on topics similar to this. Other than that, the informants who are supposed to be social media users, are mostly prone towards not wanting to involve with the government activities. On top of it all, at the end this research is managed to be completed, and these problems were solved.

Scope of Research

At a preliminary stage, this research is aiming to study mostly on the effectiveness of the government's social media from the public's perspective, therefore, it is aiming to be done amongst Malaysians, especially the social media users. As the Malaysian government have had the realization on the importance of social media in business and community relations (F. P., Jaafar, N. I., & S. A. (2015), a lot of government's public relations effort have been spread through the social media. Therefore, in order to determine the effectiveness, the users of the social media should be the main targeted audience.

From the organization's point of view, to badly replying or countering customers' complaints on social media is the worst thing to do for their own image and reputation (T. T. (2014, June 22). Tony Teh, the writer and founder of Malaysian lifestyle blog ColourlessOpinions.com had posted an article on 22 June on the worst social media disasters in Malaysia 2012 – 2013, and there were cases of badly replied responses from organizations, towards their customers on social media.

Some of the cases posted involved Petaling Jaya's Paradigm Mall, Lazada Malaysia, KL Social Media, Peugeot Malaysia, Les Deux Garcons Bangsar Bakery, and all on their Facebook page. Every Malaysian would have witnessed at least one important announcement or even crisis management on social media since it is one of the largely used medium for most of the world population today. The population who will be interviewed are among Malaysians found in Melaka, Malaysia. Interviews will be conducted until a solid conclusion is reached, whether it is effective or not.

Literature Review

Public Relations

It has been stated that it is not an easy task for public relations practitioners to cope with the changes of the media as it goes rapidly day by day. Gladly, some practitioners have worked hand in hand on preparing a handbook on coping with the wide spectrum of the world's diversity and provides perspectives on transitional pr practices. (K. S., & D. V. 2017).

In another book, the public relations theories had been discussed and listed down according to the technological usage which are changing the public relations. (T. K., 2006) Social media had been mentioned in many writings that it is transforming the interaction and communication of not only individuals, but also the trends around the word. (S. E., Prakasan, S. K., D. K., J. W., & T. S. 2011). It's been proven in the research done by Tom Keheller, that the public relations practitioners too, have been using the technology as equal as the youth today as it demands them as one of their new responsibility (T. K., & M. D. (2009).

Over the years, public relation practitioners have had to handle different kinds of responsibilities, from the old media to the new media. As the changes goes on, the risk and crises too, changes.

According to Datuk Seri Dr Salleh Said Keruak to the New Straits Times in 2015, in an article by Zahratulhayat Mat Arif entitled Public relations plays an even more crucial role today: Salleh, it was said that, in times of uncertainties, trust and reputation were two fundamentals that would become the organisation's pillars for sustainable and future growth. The public

relations industry today is said to be having more dynamic roles in shaping reputation and a catalyst for sustainability (Arif, Z. M. (2015, December 1). Public relations plays an even more crucial role today: Salleh. The New Straits Times). In Malaysia, the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia (IPRM) was established in the year 1962. This institution does not belong to any individual, objectifying to enhance the professionalism among public relations practitioners in Malaysia.

Social Media

The World Wide Web has developed a lot since it was discovered in 1991 by Tim Berners Lee. Then came in the Web 2.0 with all the instant messaging, social networking sites, and electronic mail systems when it was made popular in 1999 by Tim O'Reiley and Dale Doughtery (Dicjk, J., 2013). The social media itself has much evolved since then. According to genhq.com, the website of The Center of Generational Kinetics in Austin, Texas, the present generations that we have in the world now are the Baby Boomers, who were born from 1946 to 1964; Gen X, who were born around 1965 until 1976; Gen Y who are also known as Millenials, who were born between 1977s to early 1995; and Gen Z who were born in 1996 until now.

A research done by Lai Cheng Tung & Jean Dennis Comeau from School of Business & Administration, Wawasan Open Univeruty, Penang entitled Demographic Transformation in Defining Malaysian Generations had categorized these generations as "The Seekers", or in Malay, Pencari; "The Builders", or Pembina, "The Developers", or Pemaju; and "Generation Z, as Generasi Z itself. This is because of the difference in behavior and attitude which had been analyzed in their research.

The Seekers of Baby Boomers were born in an era full of struggle and hardship. The Builders of Generation X were born during the beginning of industrialization and urbanization. The Developers of Generation Y was born when the country was rather stable, and transformation in economic growth, income, and consumption has improved. Lastly, the Generation Z are born when the population are starting to balance out more intense competition for jobs, education, so many aspects in life, with higher income and rapid urbanization. (Tung, L. C., & Comeau, J. D. 2014)

The Baby Boomers are the generation which we can see having the largest technological divide, despite the vast changes occurring around them. Most of them from this generation in Malaysia could not cope with the technological advancements. Also, the Baby Boomers we have are mostly illiterate. Thus it makes it harder for them to understand the technology.

The next generation we have is Generation X, who were born around 1965 until 1976. This generation has been known to be independent and adaptable, and are often seen to work to live. Despite so, they are still able to cope with the changes in technology. Generation Y, were born in the midst of these changes. They experience both, half the hardship of the previous generation of 'working to live', and the vast changes of development in their living. They grew up alongside the development of technology itself. While the last Generation have been living a highly globalized world, a highly connected Malaysia with a lifelong use of media, technology, and communication. The social media has been a part of the lives of the teenagers and young adults today (Kaplan, A. M., & M. H. (2010).

As mentioned by Sonia Livingstone in her book, Young People and New Media, "We can no longer imagine living our daily lives without media, and communication technologies." (S, L., 2002)

Effectiveness

Competence is based on the ability to develop theories of what to do in new situations and the ability to behave effectively in the practitioner-client relationship. On the effectiveness of

managing crisis, what a public relations could do is to, apply the theories of public relations and even propaganda techniques in order to counter-control these sparked crisis, since rooting it up would be hard enough, nearly impossible. (A, C., & S, D. A. 1974).

It has been discussed that the key to effectiveness is immediacy. The spokesperson needs to be factual and immediate. Must be sounding certain in saying out their points. (J. G., & R. T. 2004).

According to Kathleen Banks in her book Crisis Communications: A Casebook Approach, theories can be used in effective crisis management. More effectively, with public relations theories like press agentry, diffusion theory, two-ways symmetrical model and many more. This is because, the public relations theories are related closely to propaganda techniques, which are equal to persuasion techniques. (K. B. (2017)

A good public relations handling involves active appropriate mechanisms to keep the public, media and stakeholders informed on an ongoing basis. Never to leave the audience any blank silence or time to think as they could blast many mind blowing questions. (S. C. (2017)

The public needs to be aware of the law in order to stop spreading any false information regarding the crisis and instead, helping on preventing it from happening (J. M. (2003). Other than that, a practitioner should know their audience in order how to handle them well (A. L., K. P., A. S., & K. Z. (2010)

Government
Government is the ruling system or a group of people who manages an organized community or state. In Malaysia, a government consists of legislature, executive, and judiciary body. Each governing body has its own ministries chaired by ministers.

Malaysia's first known efforts on public relations was founded to be brought up in the year 1926 when The Information Agency of the Malay States was formed during the Japanese colonialization. Functioning to carry out PR functions for the government, it was changed 19 years later into the Department of Publicity and Printing, adding the responsibility to control the radio broadcasts and printing materials for the government.

In the present day, this department is named as Department of Information, or Jabatan Penerangan Malaysia, under the Ministry of Communication and Multimedia (J. (2017).

The current practices of the government public relations involves media releases, press releases, press conferences, filtering media contents, and also crisis handling. The crisis handling nowadays involves the social media. Almost all of the ministries today have a public relations officer of their own.

Methodology
According to the four types of research (explore, descriptive, explain-predict, control), this academic scientific research falls under the **exploratory research** as it explores the uncertain effectiveness of the government's social media on the public's perspective. According to Robert Stebbins in his publication, Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences, exploratory research is when one researcher is putting themselves where discovery is possible and broad, along with the topic of the research (Stebbin s, R. A. (2001).

In-depth interview method will be used where participants will be interviewed based on the research topic, objectives and questions. According to Carolyn Boyce in her book by Pathfinder International, in depth interview is a qualitative research technique which requires individual interviews with small number of respondents to analyze a certain situation, from their perspectives (Boyce, C., & Neale, P. (2006).

Number of the interviewee will not be set as interviews will go on until a solid conclusion is made; either the government's social media are effective or vice versa. This research is only done as a pilot study. Pilot study is 'a small-scale study to help designing confirmatory studies in future' (M. A., & Campbell, M. J. (2010).

Qualitative Research Method

This method will be used for this research. It is also known as observation and in-depth interview, which can be defined as an open ended question that researchers will use in order to collect as much details and data possible. Thoughts can be freely expressed throughout the interview as any negative or positive answers will be taken into account. Interviews will be conducted until a solid conclusion is reached, whether it is effective or not.

In-Depth Interview

The research instrument which might be used in this research is in depth interviewing, where informants will be selected and interviewed based on the questions prepared and elaborated from the research questions at the beginning of this research. According to JM Johnson in his Handbook of interview research: Context and Method, this method involves social and interpersonal interaction, which differs to the kinds we often encounter from sales persons and lectures. The conversation questions more deeply and sometimes intimately (Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2002).

Research Analysis

Researchers will look for informants anywhere within the state of Melaka. The interviews are voice recorded and later the answers are rearranged into tables in Microsoft Excel, line by line of their recorded sentences. The key words of each question will then be highlighted to make it easier to understand, whether or not the informant agrees to the question, apart from giving their own opinion.

Thematic Analysis

In analyzing the recorded, then tabled answers, thematic analysis will be used, to analyze the pattern of the data. A proper analysis is important for the validity of the final results. Thematic analysis is a form of data analysis which focuses on pinpointing, examining, and recording the patterns of the data, whether or not it can be taken as a suitable answer to the topic.

According to Ditte Mortensen in her article on the steps of doing a thematic analysis, there are 6 steps; familiarization with the data, assigning preliminary codes for the data in order to describe the content, search for patterns in the data, review the theme or topic of the research, define the themes, and lastly producing the report.

4.1 Informant's Background

Informant	Gender	Occupation
Informant 1	Male	Student
Informant 2	Male	Student
Informant 3	Female	Student
Informant 4	Female	Student
Informant 5	Female	Student
Informant 6	Female	Lecturer
Informant 7	Female	Student

4.2 Research Question: Are the Public Aware of The Important Announcements Made by The Government Through Social Media?

Answer	Responses
Yes	Informant 1: Yes, they will always eventually appear on my timeline anyways.
	Informant 2: Yes, since most of my friends shares them, and that all those ministers I follow, shares them too.
	Informant 3: Yes, they will always eventually appear on my timeline anyways.
	Informant 4: Yes, they will always eventually appear on my timeline anyways.
	Informant 5: Yes, they will always eventually appear on my timeline anyways.
	Informant 6: Yes, since most of my friends shares them, and that all those ministers I follow, shares them too.
	Informant 7: Yes, since most of my friends shares them, and that all those ministers I follow, shares them too.

Question A): Are You Aware of The Announcements Made on Government's Social Media? Please Explain

The results of this question show that all of the informants are well informed and aware of the announcements made by the government through these social media accounts. Even though they do not follow these accounts, they still aware, due to the shares and retweets from the accounts they follow on social media. No researches had been done on topics similar to this one, previously.

Answer	Responses
Do not believe and analyze	Informant 1: I don't really believe them, because I know that nowadays, no online sharings should be immediately trusted. Informant 2: I take them, and analyze, but not to put my full trust on the news. Informant 3: I don't really believe them, because I know that nowadays, no online sharings should be immediately trusted. Informant 4: I don't really believe them, because I know that nowadays, no online sharings should be immediately trusted. Informant 6: I take them, and analyze, but not to put my full trust on the news. Informant 7: I take them, and analyze, but not to put my full trust on the news.
Believe straight away	Informant 5: I believe them right away

Question B): What Is/Are Your Reaction(S) Towards Announcements Made on Government's Social Media? Please Explain

This question asks the informants if they would trust the news they encounter, right away, or if they take the news and analyze first. Out of the findings, only one informant actually trust the news they encounter at first hand, with the opinion that the government sources are reliable and can always be trusted.

Answer	Responses
Yes	Informant 1: Yes, if it suits my interest then I would share or retweet.
	Informant 2: Yes, if it fits my interest, or even my family's, I would share links, or screenshots.
	Informant 5: Yes, if it suits my interest then I would share or retweet.
	Informant 6: Yes, if it fits my interest, or even my family's, I would share links, or screenshots.
	Informant 7: Yes, if it fits my interest, or even my family's, I would share links, or screenshots.
No	Informant 3: No, I take no action
	Informant 4: No, I take no action because it is not my interest

Question C): Do You Take Any Action After Seeing Announcements Made Through the Government's Social Media Accounts? Please Explain

Question C asks the informants on if they do take any action upon coming across the announcements made through government's social media. Finding shows that 6 of them would care to share, if the news fits their interest, or is relatable to their own family background. In other words, if it is profitable to them. While the other two reluctant to do so. No researches were found related to this topic however, other than the opinion of the informants.

Conclusion

To conclude all of the answers obtained from the interviews, the government's social media, is not really effective as most of the informant of this research public's perception that the government is rather irresponsive on social media interaction, and that they are all now, less interactive.

Public relations practitioners should come up with a new approach on tackling the hearts and attention of the public. Moreover, the social media users are mostly among the teenagers and young voters. Unlike the traditional corporate-controlled media, user-centred social media platforms allow individual users to become media gatekeepers and content-creators who collaboratively and proactively engage with companies through likes, posts, and shares within their personal social networks (Muntinga et al., 2011).

Social media has thus changed how organization-related content is created, distributed, and used, transferring the power to define corporate images from corporate communicators to stakeholders' online networks. However in- depth study is advisable to be conducted to dig further relevant factors and come out with recommendations.

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