

January 2012

Strategizing Relationships 2.0: An Analysis of International Companies' Use of Social Media

Jessica Marie Brightman

University of South Florida, jessicambrightman@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Mass Communication Commons](#)

Scholar Commons Citation

Brightman, Jessica Marie, "Strategizing Relationships 2.0: An Analysis of International Companies' Use of Social Media" (2012).
Graduate Theses and Dissertations.
<http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/4294>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

Strategizing Relationships 2.0:
An Analysis of International Companies' Use of Social Media

by

Jessica M. Brightman

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
School of Mass Communications
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Kelly Page Werder, Ph.D.
Michael Mitrook, Ph.D.
Kelli Burns, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:
November 14, 2012

Keywords: global, relationship management, dialogic loop, culture, Facebook, Forbes

Copyright © 2012, Jessica M. Brightman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	4
Defining Public Relations	4
International Public Relations	5
Culture	10
New Media and Technology	13
Social Media	16
Relationship Management	21
Purpose.....	26
Research Questions.....	26
CHAPTER 3: METHOD	28
Research Design.....	28
Sample Selection	32
Data Analysis	35
Intercoder Reliability	35
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS.....	36
Sample Profile.....	36
Dialogic Principles.....	41
Organizational Disclosure.....	41
Information Dissemination	43
Involvement/Interactivity.....	45
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	49
Dialogic Principle: Organizational Disclosure	50
Dialogic Principle: Information Dissemination	51
Dialogic Principle: Involvement/Interactivity	52
Frequency of Posts.....	53
Responsiveness	53
The Public's Use of Facebook & Channel of Communication.....	54
Message Subject & Culture	55
Conclusion	56

Limitations	56
Application for Practice	57
Future Recommendations	59
REFERENCES	62
CODEBOOK	71

LIST OF TABLES

1: Cultural-Economic Model – Circuit of Culture	9
2: Social Media Platforms.....	30
3: Randomly Selected Global Companies	34
4: Represented Countries within Sample	37
5: Represented Regions within Sample	38
6: Represented Industries within Sample	39
7: Global Companies Social Media Presence	40
8: Use of Organizational Disclosure via Company Facebook Page	42
9: Use of Information Dissemination via Company Facebook Page	43
10: Use of Involvement via Company Facebook Page	45
11: Use of Interactivity via Company Facebook Page	47
12: Company Post Frequency	48

ABSTRACT

Because of technological advances and the blurring of boundaries, the world is becoming a global community. Global communications have made it essential for multinational corporations to develop and maintain a consistent worldwide identity and brand image. It is no longer possible to classify people into simple and stable segments of customers; the world is evolving and so is the population. The purpose of this research is to bridge the gap between the academic and professional world of international public relations by expanding the stream of literature and incorporating a global aspect. Within the last few years, social media has seen a dramatic increase of users around the world. Companies realize the importance of becoming a part of this generational trend, yet they do not understand the reasoning behind it, and, thus, do not develop a strategy for using social media to build relationships. Using content analysis, this study expanded on the stream of relationship management theory and social media literature by adding a global element. Results suggest that global companies are beginning to utilize the dialogic principles of information dissemination, disclosure, and interactivity/involvement. Additionally, strategizing Facebook post messages to have a customer focus (i.e., asking questions, posting multimedia, providing company information) will yield greater feedback and interaction.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“We have a cultural phenomenon: the emergence of a global culture, or of cultural globalization.” - Peter L. Berger

With increased technology, the world is shrinking exponentially and becoming a global community. It is not uncommon these days for a corporation to have publics across geographical and cultural boundaries. Globalization of business, according to Ithator (2000), has created the need for international public relations practitioners “to identify, study and understand the worldviews, mindsets and habits of their global publics in order to effectively communicate” (p. 38). Without effective communication and stable relationships, there can be no progress or development. Without international public relations, many organizations will be left behind in this increasingly globalized world.

The evolution of technology gives international wings to any public relations campaign, making everything local become global and vice versa (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). Dissolving boundaries, space, language, time, and traditional modes of communication, the Web has linked people and information together more rapidly than ever before (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). The global reach of the Internet and social media has transformed the way in which many individuals gather information, seek out news, form opinions, and even contribute to news generation themselves (Moss, Powell, &

DeSanto, 2010, p. 2). Additionally, the public now uses modern technological tools as a channel of communication replacing older methods, such as newspapers or television. The marketing world, in particular, quickly embraced the Internet as an ideal medium for reaching beyond domestic markets in order to disseminate products to foreign markets (Wurtz, 2006). The Internet, and all of the tools associated with it, has changed the way companies and individuals communicate. Reaching out to a brand or company is now more accessible and instantaneous.

Globalization is the process by which economic, political, cultural, social, and other relevant systems of nations are integrating into world sub-systems (Kotabe & Helsen, 2009). Because of technological advances and the blurring of boundaries, the world is becoming a global community. The implications of the phrase “think global, act local” have preoccupied major international organizations throughout the last decade and led them to adopt long-term strategies designed to establish a worldwide presence (Doole & Lowe, 2001). Global communications have made it essential for multinational corporations to develop and maintain a consistent worldwide identity and brand image. Publics across borders are already familiar with a multitude of brands via word of mouth marketing. It is up to the company to ensure those publics’ familiarity is accurate and consistent.

Additionally, consumers are becoming more globalized through “increased travel, radio and television communications and the written media. Satellite and cable television have assisted considerably in creating worldwide customer segments for many more globally standardized products and services” (Doole & Lowe, 2001, p. 329). It is no longer possible to classify people into simple and stable segments of customers; the

world is evolving and so is the population. Individuals are now adopting a hybrid of different cultures and lifestyles making it difficult to target them psychographically. Today, there are more niche markets than ever before. The Internet allows the niche markets to find a “home” or community to interact and explore.

When multinational corporations employ “global” campaigns, are they seeking to build relationships with stakeholders, or is it merely a form of message dissemination? Using content analysis, this study expanded on current literature of relationship management theory and also added global and social media elements. Results of this study contributed to literature on international public relations and can assist public relations professionals with understanding their global audiences and how to strategically build mutually beneficial relationships across varying cultures. By analyzing what is currently being done, professionals can then strategize on what is best to do next. Previous literature regarding international public relations has examined differences in public relations styles among different countries, but little research has been conducted on public relations’ use across different borders (e.g., Kent & Taylor, 2007; Molleda, 2008). This study’s literature review explores the background of public relations, followed by an overview of international public relations. It also examines culture, new media and technology, social media and its impact on international public relations management. Chapter three of this manuscript outlines the method used to collect data and analyze results for this study. Chapter four analyzes the results of the research, followed by the closing chapter of discussion of the dialogic principles and use of Facebook, conclusion, limitations, application for practice, and future recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Public Relations

Edward L. Bernays, author of *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1923), is regarded as the “father of public relations,” as noted in his *New York Times* obituary in 1995. A member of the Committee on Public Information during World War I, he understood the need to use various communication tactics to achieve results (Newsom, 2008). Moving away from the one-way communication model inherent in propaganda, Bernays emphasized the importance and value of assessing the public’s feelings toward an organization and having greater sensitivity to the public’s wants and needs, thus advocating the use of the two-way communication model in public relations that has since been built upon by Grunig and the Excellence model (J.E. Grunig, 1992).

Public relations is a 20th century phenomenon and is declared a social science by Bernays (Newsom, 2008). The practice of public relations is most formalized in the United States, which has the greatest global concentration of public relations education programs and degrees, public relations agencies, and associations, and it generates a disproportionate amount of public relations scholarship (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). According to Moss, Powell, and DeSanto (2010), modern public relations practice is situated firmly within senior management and is used as a strategic communication tool that protects and enhances an organization’s reputation (p. 96).

While there is no universally accepted definition of public relations, American scholars Grunig and Hunt (1984) defined it as “the management of communication between an organization and its publics.” Over the last two years, the Public Relations Society of America led an international effort to update the organization’s public relations definition originally set in 1982. Industry professionals voted and now define public relations as a “strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics” (www.PRSA.org, 2012). Newsom et al. (1989) stated that public relations involves “responsibility and responsiveness in policy and information to the best interests of the organization and its publics” (p. 2). Over the years, with the emergence of new technologies and media, along with growth and expansion of the duties of a public relations practitioner, the definition has been altered and will continue to evolve. However, what is evident at the basis of all fore mentioned definitions is the importance of a relationship between organization and public(s).

International Public Relations

International public relations can be broken into two streams of research: comparative and international or cross-cultural. Identified by Culbertson and Chen (1996), these two categories are the foundations of the current state of international public relations research. Comparative research is used to “identify more or less universal problems that challenge many or all nations, and to search for generic principles that apply widely” (Culbertson & Chen, 1996, p. 2). The essence of comparative research is to find enough similarities that will yield a new global theory within public relations.

International research, on the other hand, examines the multinational organization and its structures and processes (Wakefield, 2008) and focuses on the practice of public relations in an international or cross-cultural context (Culbertson & Chen, 1996).

Many professionals possess a domestic perspective and assume that a public relations campaign taking place in Italy, for example, is considered international or global. It is, in fact, a domestic campaign that is foreign to someone from a different country, such as when an Italian bank runs a campaign to build a relationship with other Italians instead of publics across borders. A public relations campaign cannot be classified as international or multinational if it is only affecting publics from within the same country for which the messages are created and delivered. International public relations – as defined by Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, and Agee (2007) – is the “planned and organized effort of a company, institution, or government to establish mutually beneficial relations with the publics of other nations” (p. 516).

The important elements in an international program, therefore, boil down to where the entity is located and to which publics it must build relationships (Choi & Cameron, 2005). International public relations, according to Reed (1989), means that a company is interacting with “audiences different from it culturally, linguistically, [and] geographically.” Additionally, different cultural subtleties, such as political and economic factors, alter the definition and implementation of public relations in countries across the globe. For example, practitioners in countries with little freedom of the media have to develop new strategies based on methods that do not rely on news releases’ placement in newspapers and other outlets. They must accommodate to the country and implement public relations in different ways. Realistically speaking, most international public

relations agencies originally based in the United States are selectively international rather than completely global. They are driven by business and economics, not by the richness of culture or by communication altruism (Curtin & Gaither, 2007).

Doole and Lowe (2001) note that one of the main roles of international public relations is to try to manage the often substantially different and conflicting expectations of stakeholders. Global public relations and publicity may seem quite insignificant as marketing tools at home, but they do take on a much more important role in the global arena, where anti-globalizers, unfavorable media coverage, and damage control requires constant vigilance (Bamossy & Johansson, 2009). Additionally, international public relations efforts never begin at a neutral starting point because mere organizational presence generates messages (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). From the starting point, multinational corporations are already dealing with crisis communications before being able to build mutually beneficial, stable relationships.

Relationships between an organization and its key publics are built and maintained through building behavioral and symbolic relationships. What people think of an organization is based on communication about the organization as well as their personal experience with the organization (Moss, Powell, & DeSanto, 2010). International public relations is challenging due to factors such as “complexity of different market conditions, differences in media availability, languages, cultural sensitivities, regulations controlling advertising and sales promotions, and the challenge of providing adequate resourcing levels,” (Doole & Lowe, 2001, p. 329). Even small details, such as the colors used on a brochure as part of a campaign’s materials, can create a divide between the organization and its publics. While it may not be feasible for a

public relations practitioner to learn every aspect of a new culture or become fluent in a different language, he or she must still conduct as much environmental research as possible to support strategic communications. Additionally, hiring locally can add a more authentic and believable feel to a campaign by the practitioner bringing a cultural understanding to the strategy and development.

Additionally, past international public relations research has explored the connection between global media ownership and the messages of transnational corporations (Pal & Dutta, 2008) as well as a cultural-economic model of public relations developed by Curtin and Gaither (2005). Their model is based on the circuit of culture (du Gay et al., 1997) and allows practitioners not only to be open to change but to expect it. The cultural-economic model's emphasis on communicative relationships positions public relations as a process (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). The circuit comprises five moments, as further defined in Table 1 on the next page:

“Representation, production, consumption, identity, and regulation. These moments form the model, which encompasses the infinite points in which culture and power meet in a complex dance between situational particulars and larger cultural practices,” (Gaither & Curtin, 2008, p. 117).

The cultural-economic model provides guidance to practitioners negotiating issues of identity in an increasingly globalized world market by diaspora, the spread of ethnic groups outside their homelands; and hybridity, the emergence of overlapping forms of identities (Gaither & Curtin, 2008, p. 120).

Sriramesh and Vercic (2003) suggested five separate environmental variables that can be used by public relations practitioners to design public relations strategies specific to a given country. The variables are: political ideology, economic system, degree of

activism, culture, and media system. In order to better understand public relations practices in international settings, Choi and Cameron (2005) recommend that future studies should explore other latent contingency variables that may influence different cultures.

Table 1: Cultural-Economic Model – Circuit of Culture

Moment in Circuit	Definition
Regulation	Controls on cultural activity, ranging from formal and legal controls, such as regulations, laws, and institutionalized systems, to the informal and local controls of cultural norms
Production	Outlines the process by which creators of cultural products imbue them with meaning, a process often called encoding
Representation	Form an object takes and the meanings encoded in that form
Consumption	When audiences decode messages; Consumers bring their own semantic networks of meaning to any communicative exchange
Identities	Meanings that accrue to all social networks, from nations to organizations to publics

Note. Gaither, T.K., & Curtin, P.A. (2008). Examining the heuristic value of models of international public relations practice: a case study of the Arla Foods crisis. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 20, 115-137.

Another theory that has been incorporated into international public relations research is the situational theory of publics, which consists of two dependent variables (active and passive communication behavior) and three independent variables (problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement). Further research has added cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral effects to the list of dependent variables (Moss, MacManus, & Vercic, 1997).

International public relations is an ongoing area of study that will continue to evolve as the organizations of the world merge and adapt to a globalized world creating new publics, relationships and opportunities.

Culture

Communication and culture influence one another (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003). According to Curtin and Gaither (2007), culture represents the layers public relations must contend with to get to shared situations at the core of international public relations, whether “building nations, attracting tourism, spurring economic growth, or quelling discord from opposition groups or nations” (p. 13-14). Scholars from many different disciplines, including anthropology and sociology among others, have attempted to define the concept of culture, which can be described as meaning that is continuously produced and consumed within a society.

Culture is learned and influences the way we think, feel, and behave (Nunez, Mahdi, & Popma, 2007). Hofstede (1984) defined it as the “collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (p. 25). He identified five societal culture dimensions: power distance, collectivism versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and Confucian dynamism (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede & Bond, 1987). Using these cultural indices can provide useful insights and allow practitioners to better predict the general flow of public opinion and anticipate issues of concern (Gaither & Curtin, 2008). Identifying the impact of environmental variables on public relations practice helps increase ability to predict which strategies and techniques are better suited to a particular organizational

environment (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003). There are times when one cannot be involved in two-way symmetrical communication because of situational and environmental factors or when it is inappropriate or unethical (Choi & Cameron, 2005). It is the responsibility of the international public relations practitioner to determine where on the advocacy-accommodation continuum of the contingency theory (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997) multinational corporation falls and what the most effective strategy will be.

Mistakes in the use of language, particularly using messages that do not translate or are mistranslated, are a common problem (Doole & Lowe, 2001), but more serious is a lack of sensitivity to different cultures among international communicators. Lack of cultural awareness can lead to communication void of essential emotional content that may be needed to effectively communicate in some societies (Ihator, 2000, p. 38). Understanding the local culture is essential for building relationships, and cultural meaning is encoded in the format and content of public relations materials, including colors, images, and text. In some cultures (low context), the message is clearly articulated in the words, while in others (high context), what was said and not said have to be considered to derive any substantive meaning (Ihator, 2000, p. 40). High-context cultures tend to use indirect, non-confrontational, and vague language, relying on the listener or reader's ability to grasp the meaning from the context. Low-context cultures tend to use a more direct, confrontational, and explicit approach to ensure that the listener receives the message exactly as it was sent (Wurtz, 2006, p. 278). To clarify, the United States would be an example of a low-context culture, and Japan or countries from the Middle East exemplify a high-context culture.

Many international case studies utilize the comparative approach and analyze public relations in one country or region to that of the United States (Gaither & Curtin, 2008). Essentially, it is like comparing apples and oranges; the findings will always be skewed because many countries do not view public relations in the same way that North Americans do, nor do some countries even have a similar connotation for public relations. Previous findings have been “culturally specific, resulting from the domestic perspective of the practitioners who were interviewed,” (Choi & Cameron, 2005). The ethnocentric nature of communication models and paradigms developed in North America may “be inadequate, or even irrelevant, abroad” (Ihator, 2000, p. 44). Few studies have examined what roles local cultural dimensions may play in conflict situations between multinational corporations and local publics (Choi & Cameron, 2005).

Over the years, however, L. Grunig, J. Grunig, and Vercic (1998) have extended the excellence study by replicating it in foreign organizations, specifically in Slovenia and the United Kingdom. This later developed into a theory of generic principles and specific applications that falls midway between an ethnocentric theory (that public relations is the same everywhere) and a polycentric theory (that public relations is different everywhere” (J. Grunig, 2006, p. 170). The theory distinguished between the generic variables of excellence that should be universal and those specific factors that can affect an organization in each of its host locations around the world (Wakefield, 2008).

The generic principles to determine excellence in public relations practices are:

- (1) Involvement of public relations in strategic management,
- (2) Empowerment of public relations in the dominant coalition or a direct reporting relationship to senior management,
- (3) Integrated public relations function,
- (4) Public relations as a management function separate from other functions,
- (5) The role of the public relations practitioner,
- (6) Two-way symmetrical model of public relations,
- (7) A symmetrical

system of internal communication, (8) Knowledge potential for managerial role and symmetrical public relations, and (9) Diversity embodied in all roles (Vercic et al., 1996, pp. 32-33).

According to J. Grunig, (2006), “the theory holds that, in a broad, abstract way, the excellence principles can be applied in different cultures, economic systems, political systems, media systems, levels of development, and degrees of activist activity” (p. 170). However, postmodern scholars such as Holtzhausen (2007) have challenged the general perspective framework, maintaining that postmodern conditions require different forms of public relations in each setting.

New Media and Technology

The evolution of technology gives international wings to any public relations campaign, making the local global and vice versa (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). Dissolving boundaries, space, language, time, and traditional modes of communication, the Web has linked people and information together more rapidly than ever before (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). The global reach of the Internet and of social media has transformed the way in which many individuals “gather information, seek out news, form opinions and even contribute to news generation themselves (through a variety of Web sites and mechanisms such as blogging and the posting of messages and images on social media sites such as Facebook and YouTube)” (Moss, Powell, & DeSanto, 2010, p. 2).

The marketing world, in particular, quickly embraced the Internet as an ideal medium for reaching beyond domestic markets in order to disseminate products to foreign markets (Wurtz, 2006). With the use of e-commerce and other similar tools,

corporations no longer need to rely on its target markets physically walking into a brick and mortar store for purchases anymore. Instead, individuals from across the world can all use the Internet to purchase the same items from separate locations with only a difference in cost of shipping. Corporations are also now able to receive feedback from customers around the world with easier networks and more efficient systems. Customers from low context countries are likely to embrace the Internet much more readily than those in high context cultures because of the lower emphasis placed on building verbal and non-verbal interactions when building relationships and purchasing products (Doole & Lowe, 2001). Undoubtedly, the new technologies of communication can help practitioners stay in touch with their publics globally (Moss, MacManus, & Vercic, 1997).

Just as culture changes over time, media all over the world are also ever evolving. To help public relations professionals design media relations strategies that are appropriate to different media environments, Sriramesh (1999) proposed a framework of three factors: media control, media outreach, and media access. This framework may make it easier for international public relations professionals to maintain effective channels of communication between their client organizations and relevant media around the world (Sriramesh & Vercic, 2003). It must be noted, however, that the types of effective channels vary from country to country even if they possess similar political or economic structures. In some cultures, “interpersonal communication may be more successful than mass media because of the high level of illiteracy and lack of many mass media channels” (Ihator, 2000, p. 42). The opportunity to use mass media to reach the target market is, therefore, severely limited in some countries. Even in developed countries it may not be possible to reach the majority of the market because of the

absence of truly national press or national television (Doole & Lowe, 2001). In some countries where the governments and economies are still developing, a public relations practitioner would not have as easy of access to the press as they would in the United States.

As mass media is one of the most important tools of communicating and building relationships for public relations practitioners, the understanding of the media's role and functions in a culture becomes very important (Ihator, 2000). The increased emphasis on technology and instant access to worldwide audiences demands a greater sensitivity to cultural differences (Zaharna, 2001). Technoscape is a concept by Pal and Dutta (2008) that addresses the fluidity of technology and the possibility of knowledge flow across boundaries, which significantly impacts the ways in which information is crafted and targeted toward various publics. While new technology has its benefits, one must not forget that the majority of the world still lacks access to it (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). To limit the world even more, a majority of the available Web sites are in English, yet only a small fraction of the accessible population can read or speak English. How is that acting globally? Organizations need to rethink their strategies and offer more language options.

Whilst the methods of communication are changing more rapidly than ever before through the introduction of new technology, they should be regarded as tools in the management of the relationships between the firm and its customers (Doole & Lowe, 2001). New technology can either be empowering or disempowering for both producers and consumers. Recognizing this changing dynamic, many public relations firms and in-house departments have already begun to integrate Internet and social media-based

elements into their communications strategies (Moss, Powell, & DeSanto, 2010). In the digital world, the roles of producer and consumer collide (Curtin & Gaither, 2007).

Social Media

Social networking is a global phenomenon. Social media tools like wikis, blogs, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter, and “mashups” are increasingly used to organize and share information (Makinen & Kuira, 2008). boyd and Ellison (2008) defined these social network sites as Web-based services that allow individuals to “(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p. 211). An additional viewpoint, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) described social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, which allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

To take the definition one step further, Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, and Silvestre (2011) presented a framework that defines social media by using seven functional building blocks: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups (p. 243). Each block is designed to examine a specific aspect of the social media experience and the implications it has on companies or organizations. Social media strategy can be based on the firm’s use and balance of the seven blocks.

Social media offers swifter, more subjective, and more detailed coverage during a fast-moving and changing situation unlike traditional media that is updated on a slower basis. Rather than replacing traditional media, social media tools merely supplement the

communication and dialogue. Additionally, new social media offer opportunities for a diversity of voices to be heard and to connect with each other (Makinen & Kuria, 2008).

Founded in 2004, Facebook's mission is to make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them (www.Facebook.com). The addition of brand pages now allows consumers to follow and interact with companies and organizations, pop culture icons, sports figures, and so on. With the concept developed in Boston and the company founded in California, Facebook has since become a global company with international offices in nearly twenty countries. Locations include Amsterdam, Auckland, Brussels, Hong Kong, London, Madrid, Sao Paulo, Singapore, Toronto, and more.

Another popular social media platform is a microblogging site known as Twitter, which is a mixture of messaging, social networking, and being in the moment, having the ability to stay updated on news and events from around the world in 140 characters or less. Social media monitoring company SemioCast reported that Twitter reached the half-billion mark of worldwide users, with the United States and Brazil leading of the top twenty countries with accounts (www.SemioCast.com). The study also revealed that user-base growth is slowing in Japan and Korea, yet Japan remains one of the most active countries.

A study by Nielsen (2011) examining different global markets found that social networks and blogs are the top online destination in sampled countries for Internet users. Australians were found to spend the most time visiting social networks and blogs, and Germans spend more time on social network sites than they do any other online category.

Ranking only second to Facebook, the blogging platform Tumblr received more page views than other social networks or blogs by Internet users in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, Orkut, a social networking and discussion site powered by Google, is the number one social media site in Brazil.

While many individuals believe social media is an additional marketing tool, Qualman (2011) asserts that it is imperative for social media to be an integral part of a company's overall strategy; the overall success of a company is partly owed to its success within social media. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the Internet and social media has transformed communication among the public during the last decade. Social media is the new arm of public relations and conversations need to be monitored as an indicator of brand effectiveness. Once that achievement has been measured, the organization can look to digital innovation to satisfy their increasingly sophisticated followers (Moss, Powell, & DeSanto, 2010). Additionally, the balances of power between organizations, media, and publics have shifted as well. Boundaries are no longer the same as they used to be; the audience now has the capability to produce just as much information as the original media.

Living in the world of Web 2.0, and the rapidly evolving technologies associated with it, social media requires more effort to avoid than partake. However, what differentiates social media from traditional media? Both media disseminate information and provide entertainment; yet social media tend to go beyond the boundaries of traditional media in regards to reach, accessibility, usability, immediacy, and permanence. Social media, according to Makinen and Kuira (2008), functions as an alternative medium for citizen communication or participatory journalism. Citizens view and

approach social media as a way to become involved, whether it be for a hobby in their interest or in regards to a crisis ranging from a local to global nature. People now view social media as another way to reach out to a brand, whether to seek information or to display praise or criticism.

How social media separates itself from the traditional outlets is its ability to build stronger relationships filled with more of a dialogic communication flow as compared to previously sending out information but never truly receiving much feedback. Using social networks to spread messages to consumers can give organizations the sincere, human voice they need to maintain trust and rebuild connections (Cakim, 2010). However, social media is not limited, nor should it be, to simple interaction. Used advantageously, social media can transform all aspects of business from branding and reputation, to communication and outreach, and identifying strategic risks (D.F. Larcker, S.M. Larcker, & Tayan, 2012).

Consequently, the power of social media does not always lie in the hands of the large multinational corporations. Previously, if there was a group of people opposed to the beliefs or actions of an organization it would take a tremendous amount of time and energy for them to be noticed and create any amount of change. However, in today's world, activists have the world at their fingertips and can easily produce a Web site, forum, etc. to make themselves heard. Additionally, they now have access to similarly minded people from all over the world that can join forces without even being in the same hemisphere. What might have been difficult at organizing an effective protest before, activists are now capable of organizing large simultaneous protests at locations all over the world for the same multinational corporation. An organization might not feel

threatened with less than one hundred people gathering at one location to state their viewpoint, but thousands gathering at multiple locations will certainly cause a corporation to at least listen. Not only will multinational corporations feel the need to act because of a protest but because with access to the new media today information spreads like wildfire and every corporation wants to uphold the best reputation and organizational identity as possible.

As one of the first academic studies to provide data on overall social media adoption, research by Eyrych, Padman, and Sweetser (2008) provided an overview of social media adoption trends in the public relations industry. On average, respondents only used 5.97 of the 18 total social media tools listed in an online survey. The study also found that respondents were slower to “integrate more technologically complicated tools” such as social networks or virtual worlds. Social networks are becoming a more recognized and user-friendly service, and a replication of this study four years later with the current trends might show a greater number of respondent use among different social media tools.

Published by the Stanford Graduate School of Business (2012), a team of researchers surveyed 180 top-level executives and board members in North America on their perceptions of social media use and compared it to actual social media application within their organizations. The results concluded a large disconnect between the employers and companies’ understanding of social media and the actions taken to implement such strategies into their corporate policy and risk management practices. It is likely that such sentiment can also be found within the management of global corporations as well.

Relationship Management

Throughout the years, numerous researchers have delved into the dialogic potential of online communication for building and maintaining relationships with publics (Taylor, Kent, & White, 2001; Kent, Taylor, & White, 2003; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Park & Reber, 2008; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). Organizations, no matter what size or industry, need to build and maintain relationships for strategic purposes and successful outcomes. In international public relations, as with domestic practices, relationships and dialogue are key to successful outcomes. In today's world, the global communicator has to engage in dialogue, not top-down promotion (Bamossy & Johansson, 2009). Dialogue needs to be maintained to be effective in the long run. An organization must continually scan its environment to identify its publics' needs and goals and then communicate symmetrically with them (taking into account the interests of the public as well as the interests of the organization) in order to cultivate a high quality, long-term relationship with its publics.

An idea first proposed by Ferguson (1984), relationship management theory addresses the need for definition and measurement of relationships between organizations and their publics. Almost three decades later, the relationship management literature has since explored the usefulness of the organization–public relationship, and it has quantified antecedents, maintenance strategies, and quality outcomes of the organization–public relationship (Broom et al., 1997; Hon & Grunig, J., 1999; Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Grunig, J. & Huang, 2000; Ledingham, 2001; Ki & Hon, 2007; Kim, 2007; Yang, 2007).

One relationship management research streams involves the Internet's and mediated technologies' effect on relationship management, with much of this research focusing on the Internet's potential to increase dialogic communication between organizations and their publics (Taylor & Kent, 1998; Kent & Taylor, 2002; Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008; Levenshus, 2010). Furthermore, Taylor and Kent (1998) identified five dialogic principles for organizations to use when building relationships through online communication: the dialogic loop, the usefulness of information, the generation of return visits, the intuitiveness/ease of interface, and the rule of conservation of visitors. Surprisingly, with as much as the Internet has changed over the last fifteen years, these dialogic principles still remain true and effective. Using a theory-based framework, Kent and Taylor's (1998) guide to relationship building through the Web can still be used by public relations practitioners today as companies are still not fully utilizing the dialogic aspect of the Web, but have mastered the technical and design aspects.

As the principles illustrate, according to Kent and Taylor (2002), dialogue is not an easy outcome of communication and relationships. It requires the commitment on the part of individuals and organizations of resources, training, and evaluation. Additionally, organizations can reinforce their commitment to dialogue and foster more interaction with publics by using mass mediated channels to communicate with publics. It is with the use of social media that global companies can create more dialogue and interaction, thus managing those relationships, with publics across borders. Waters et al. (2009) posited that out of all the dialogic principle strategies used in relationship cultivation, merging them into three simplified categories – disclosure, information dissemination, and involvement – was the most effective.

Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) acknowledged a gap between the use and design of blogs and the potential of traditional Web sites to foster dialogue and build relationships. The study found that blogs are more likely to incorporate dialogic principles than traditional Web sites, thus having greater relationship-building potential. Also investigating blogs' use as a relationship management tool, Sweetser and Metzgar (2007) found that relationships created through blogs impact the perception of a crisis and the level of a crisis that an organization experiences. Using an experimental design with control group, results indicate that blog readers perceive a lower level of crisis than those not exposed to blogs. While this study does further relationship management literature, it does not add to the stream of information regarding relationship management and dialogue.

In a study by Ingenhoff and Koelling (2009), the scholars posited that nonprofit organizations benefit from the Web's relationship building ability. Results from content analysis found that Swiss nonprofit organizations are not using the Internet as efficiently as possibly, yet the organizations recognize the importance of engaging publics in dialogue. Also investigating nonprofit organizations, Briones, Kuch, Liu, and Jin (2011) discovered that, by having two-way dialogue via social media such as Twitter and Facebook, the American Red Cross reported faster service for the community, more media coverage and greater feedback that will in turn be used to improve the organization.

In 2001, Huang developed a cross-cultural, multiple-item scale for measuring organization-public relationships, called the Organization–Public Relationship Assessment (OPRA). The scale was developed “not only to fulfill the standards of reliability and validity in measurement but also to acquire cross-cultural comparability so

that the instrument can be used in both Western and Eastern cultures” (p. 62). In addition to trust, commitment, control mutuality, and satisfaction, Huang (2001) added a fifth dimension to the scale, “face and favor,” relating to the importance of social relationships in Eastern society. OPRA was thoroughly tested and found to be a concise multiple-item scale with good reliability and validity that an organization can use to better understand its publics’ perceptions toward their relationship quality and thus improve public relations practice (Huang, 2001, p. 82).

In a study by Ni (2009) exploring the perceived connection between relationship building and the global strategies of multinational corporations, it was found that different global strategies were, in fact, perceived to be related to different types of relationships of employees, as well as quality of relationships. Integrity as one dimension of trust, control mutuality, and commitment was perceived to be most related to globalization strategies (Ni, 2009). Because many multinational corporations may be facing challenges in the foreign markets they have entered, these findings are important to public relations practitioners to cultivate relationships with local employees in the global context and to lessen the difficulty of practicing internal public relations (Ni, 2009). Multinational corporations must understand that it is not only important to build external relationships, but when setting up in a new, foreign location and hiring locals and investing in the community they must also focus on building and strengthening internal relationships.

Advancing relationship management research from a cross-cultural perspective, Men and Tsai (2011) examined how companies use social media to facilitate dialogue in two culturally distinct countries, China and the United States. Furthering the comparative

international public relations approach, the study found culture plays a significant role in shaping dialogue due to the type of posts and messaging. Content analysis revealed that companies from both countries used the dialogic strategies of disclosure, information disseminations and interactivity proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998) and Waters et al. (2009). Recognizing the importance of social media is the first step. Following through with the dialogic principles differentiates a successful multinational company from an ethnocentric, unrevealing company.

A commonly used index in relationship management research was identified by Huang (1997) and further developed by Hon and J. Grunig (1999), which identifies relational quality outcomes to measure the dimensions of the public's perception of its relationship with an organization:

Trust is defined as “one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party.” *Control mutuality* refers to “the degree to which each parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another.” *Commitment* is defined as “the extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote.” *Satisfaction* represents whether one party feels favorably toward the other (p. 3).

International public relations must focus on the management aspect, rather than the technical practice and application. The strategies and concepts need to be developed at the executive level to intermix with overall business goals, and the tactic execution is handed off to public relations executives in foreign country offices, where cultural differences may be identified and discussed to better develop targeted communication messages.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to continue to bridge the gap between the academic and professional world of international public relations by incorporating theory into a new media phenomenon. Within the last few years, social media has seen a dramatic increase of users around the world. For example, Facebook has one billion monthly active users as of November 2012, and approximately 81 percent of its monthly active users are outside the United States and Canada (www.Facebook.com). Additionally, Twitter is used by people in nearly every country in the world, offered in more than 20 different languages, and has more than 500 million users with 70 percent of tweets coming from outside the United States (www.Twitter.com).

Companies realize the importance of becoming a part of this generational trend, yet they do not understand the reasoning behind it, and, thus, do not develop a strategy for using social media to build relationships. This study examines the current environment of global social media and provides recommendations for future application and strategy when communicating and building relationships with multiple publics via social media, specifically Facebook.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review and theory, three research questions were developed to guide data collection and analysis:

RQ1: Do global companies have a presence on social media networks, including a Facebook page?

RQ2: Are global companies actively integrating relationship development strategies into their Facebook pages, specifically engaging publics in a dialogic loop?

The next chapter discusses the method used for this study and how the research questions were tested, including the research design, sample selection, intercoder reliability, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This chapter describes the research design and procedures used to test the research questions for this study, including sample selection, instrumentation and data analysis. Dialogic principle strategies of relationship management were used to explore how global companies use social network sites to build and foster relationships.

Research Design

Due to the nature of this study, the most effective research method was content analysis, which attempts to quantitatively summarize different messages. According to Neuendorf (2002), “content analysis may be conducted on written text, transcribed speech, verbal interactions, visual images, characterizations, nonverbal behaviors, sound events, or any other type of message” (p. 24). In particular, this study analyzed different social media platforms and messages to see if and how global companies build relationships with its stakeholders by applying dialogic principle strategies to its social media use. By using content analysis, this study expanded the current international public relations and social media literature by incorporating the use of dialogic principles of relationship management: to see if they established a presence on Facebook and other social media networks and to investigate how global companies are integrating relationship development strategies into their Facebook pages. Essentially, do global

companies use social media to build and cultivate relationships, or do they merely use them as a way to distribute more information without regard to feedback?

The first step of this research was to create a content analysis codebook and a coding form using the quantitative measures of relationship quality outcomes developed by Kent and Taylor (1998). Coding categories used in this study were adapted from previous research and extended to include a global element (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Waters, Burnett, Lamm & Lucas, 2009; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). These documents were then used to examine the social media pages of 25 different global companies, randomly selected from *Forbes'* 2012 list of the top 2,000 global companies, and examine key themes or patterns. Divided into multiple sections, the codebook examined the demographic information of each company, social media landscape, interactivity, disclosure, and specifics of each post: origin (company or user), subject (ranging from information seeking to solicitation of responses), use of links or multimedia, response time, amount of feedback, and tone.

A code sheet was developed for use in analyzing and exploring both the Facebook profiles and specific posts from both the companies and users during the seven randomly selected days in August 2012. Then, all Facebook posts during the randomly selected time periods were analyzed and coded accordingly. Next, multiple descriptive statistics were conducted to explore the current social media presence of 25 randomly-selected global companies and to further examine how the global companies use dialogic principles with social media to build and maintain relationships with publics. Prior to final coding of all 25 companies' Facebook accounts, intercoder reliability was tested using Holsti's method and resulted in an acceptable score of 86.4% agreement.

To answer research question one – which investigates the current social presence of global companies – the researcher first visited the company’s Web site looking for any social media network mentions or hyperlinks. Then, the researcher searched for accounts of the selected global companies on the platforms outlined in Table 2. If the global company did have an account, the number of fans, followers, video subscribers, etc. was recorded. These results were used to investigate the magnitude of the global companies’ presence on various social media networks.

Table 2: Social Media Platforms

Social Networking	Facebook
Microblogging	Twitter
Blog	In-House, Blogger, Wordpress, Tumblr, Other
Video Sharing	YouTube, Vimeo, Other
Photo Sharing	Flickr, Photobucket, Pinterest, Other
Location-Based/Check-In	Foursquare, Yelp

The researcher also examined if the company’s Web site was offered in different languages. Additional information analyzed for this study included the country and continent of origin, number of employees, yearly sales in U.S. dollars, and, lastly, how many different locations the company has and in how many different countries. Each company was also categorized by industry: Finance and Banking = 1, Food and Drink = 2, Retail = 3, Transportation = 4, Environmental and Waste = 5, Electronics and

Technology = 6, Healthcare = 7, Insurance = 8, Construction = 9, Household Items = 10 and Other = 11.

In order to answer research question two – how global companies are integrating relationship development strategies into their Facebook pages, specifically to engage publics in a dialogic loop – this study then took a more focused approach. At this point, only the companies' Facebook accounts were analyzed and the posts from users and companies during a randomly selected composite week in August 2012 were coded. Each day of the week (Sunday through Saturday) was represented randomly to allow for a greater representation of the company's Facebook activity, rather than selecting seven chronological days. The following randomly selected days were used in this study: Sunday, August 5; Wednesday, August 8; Monday, August 13; Saturday, August 18; Thursday, August 23; Tuesday, August 28; and Friday, August 31. To allow a fair analysis across all companies, screenshots of the Facebook posts were taken on the same day at the end of August and then analyzed over a period of time.

Prior to coding the individual posts, the Facebook pages were first analyzed for use of the dialogic principle strategy of disclosure. Each account page was analyzed for the inclusion or absence of the following: brief company description, year founded and/or company history, mission statement, link to the company Web site, a logo for its profile picture, a cover photo, and links to additional company Facebook pages in other regions. Additionally, the Facebook pages were classified as active or inactive, with an active Facebook page defined as posting on three or more days during the week.

To test for the use of the dialogic principle strategy of involvement as well as information dissemination, each of the Facebook entries were first coded based on its

language, day posted, origin – user or company – and its popularity – the number of likes, shares, and comments. If a public user wrote the Facebook post, it was then coded by the subject of the message: information seeking, unsolicited information, emotional expression, advocacy, complaints or criticism, compliments or praise, and unrelated information related to the company. Furthermore, the post was then analyzed for its use of multimedia, whether or not it asked a question, and information regarding the company's response, or lack thereof. If the company wrote the Facebook post, it was also coded for its subject but with different categories than users: product specific, promotion specific, company specific (this could include a press release, annual report, etc.), product/industry related education or entertainment, solicitation of responses, and unrelated to company. The post was coded based on its use of multimedia and provision of links to the following Web sites: company's homepage, external media news items, company's FAQ page, other social media network, unrelated, or no links used. Lastly,

Additionally, the tone of each Facebook post (and the respective comments associated with it) were assessed with the following variables: (1) Negative: The post expresses or implies disagreement and is not enthusiastic. (2) Positive: The post expresses or implies affirmation and agreement. The post shows optimism and confidence with no possibility of doubt. Or (3) Neutral: The post has no strongly marked positive or negative characteristics.

Sample Selection

An American company, *Forbes* is a business magazine known for its annual publication of lists, including topics such as the wealthiest people, sports, technology,

education, places, and companies. For this study, the researcher used the ninth annual (April 2012) publication of *Forbes*' Global 2000 Leading Companies.

The list is compiled by screening Interactive Data, Thomson Reuters Fundamentals, and Worldscope databases via FactSet Research Systems for publicly traded companies. Using these databases as the primary sources of data, *Forbes* screens for the biggest companies in four metrics: sales, profits, assets, and market value. *Forbes* first creates four separate lists of the 2000 biggest companies in each of the metrics, and a company needs to qualify for at least one of the lists in order to be eligible for the final Global 2000 ranking. *Forbes* then adds up the scores for all four metrics (equally weighted) and compiles a composite score for each company based on their rankings for sales, profits, assets, and market value. The companies are then sorted in descending order by the highest composite score and, finally, the *Forbes* Global 2000 rank is applied. The highest composite score gets the highest rank (www.Forbes.com). This year's rankings span 66 countries, with the United States (n = 524) and Japan (n = 258) dominating the list.

Using a random number chart, 25 of the top 2,000 global companies were selected for this study (see Table 3). An advantage to using a random sample is the ability to calculate the statistical sampling error, which provides the researcher with an idea of how accurate the sample will be in predicting similar results, generalizing the results to the population, and enhancing the external validity of the study (Wrench et al., 2008).

Table 3: Randomly Selected Global Companies

Rank on <i>Forbes</i> Chart	Company	Country Origin	Industry
49	BHP Billiton	Australia	Environmental and Waste
125	Credit Suisse Group	Switzerland	Financial and Banking
138	Unicredit Group	Italy	Financial and Banking
320	Elektrobras	Brazil	Other
358	Tyco International	Switzerland	Other
372	Discover Financial Services	United States	Financial and Banking
430	Thermo Fisher Scientific	United States	Healthcare
881	Banque Saudi Fransi	Saudi Arabia	Financial and Banking
985	Coach	United States	Retail
1152	Hebei Iron & Steel	China	Construction
1258	Sunoco	United States	Environmental and Waste
1277	Nielsen Holdings	Netherlands	Other
1289	Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha	Japan	Transportation
1293	Clorox	United States	Household Items
1345	Henry Schein	United States	Financial and Banking
1378	Nurnberger	Germany	Insurance
1395	Tobu Railway	Japan	Transportation
1482	Elan	Ireland	Healthcare
1510	LAN Airlines	Chile	Transportation
1545	Roper Industries	United States	Finance and Banking
1733	Alexion Pharmaceuticals	United States	Healthcare
1885	FIBI Holding	Israel	Finance and Banking
1914	Aspen Pharmacare Holding	South Africa	Healthcare
1917	Synovus Financial	United States	Financial and Banking
1977	Fossil	United States	Retail

Data Analysis

Data analyses were performed using SPSS 20.0 for Mac. Using descriptive statistics, the results were examined to answer this study's research questions regarding how global companies use social media to engage with publics, building and maintaining relationships, by fostering dialogue.

Intercoder Reliability

The level of reliability for coding was determined by the calculation of an intercoder agreement coefficient on 20 percent of the sample using Holsti's method, which was calculated by dividing the number of agreed upon items between two coders by the total number of items they both coded (Holsti, 1969). The second coder was trained for one hour on an overview of international public relations and cultures, the different social media platforms, including the main uses for each, as well the relationship management variable definitions. The coding results were calculated, and, provided the intercoder reliability was statistically acceptable (86.4% agreement) based on Holsti's method of agreement, the information was then used for further data analysis.

The next chapter analyzes the data of 311 company and user Facebook entries for the use dialogic principles of relationship building and management.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study is to expand the stream of relationship management theory and social media literature by adding a global element. It aims to investigate two research questions: to explore the social media presence of global companies – to see if they are using Facebook and other social media networks and to investigate how global companies are integrating relationship development strategies into their Facebook pages.

Sample Profile

Tables 4 - 6 present some of the demographic qualities of the 25 randomly selected *Forbes* top global companies. As it did in the full *Forbes* list of 2,000 global companies, the United States also holds the largest representation of companies for this random sample. Japan, once again, took second place with the most companies represented, sharing the title with Switzerland. The sample of countries for this study slightly correlates with the total population. United States represented 40% of the randomly selected sample and 26% of the total population, and Japan represented 8% of the sample and 12.9% of the population.

Table 4: Represented Countries Within Sample

Country	Sample Percentage	Number
Australia	4%	1
Brazil	4%	1
Chile	4%	1
China	4%	1
Germany	4%	1
Ireland	4%	1
Israel	4%	1
Italy	4%	1
Japan	8%	2
Netherlands	4%	1
Saudi Arabia	4%	1
South Africa	4%	1
Switzerland	8%	2
United States	40%	10
Total	100%	25

Of the sample for this study, 40% (n = 10) represented American companies. Japan and Switzerland were the second most represented company origins at 8% (n = 2) each. The other countries represented in this international study were Australia, Italy, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, China, Netherlands, Germany, Ireland, Chile, Israel, and South Africa all at 4% (n = 1) of the sample. The subsequent results of this study examined the individual posts and Facebook accounts within geographical regions instead of singular

countries. The separate regions are as follows: Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, South America, and the Middle East. See Table 5 for percentage breakdowns.

Table 5: Represented Regions Within Sample

Region	Sample Percentage	Number
Africa	4%	1
Asia	12%	3
Australia	4%	1
Europe	24%	6
Middle East	8%	2
North America	40%	10
South America	8%	2
Total	100%	25

The full *Forbes* global 2,000 list included 89 individual industries ranging from advertising to trucking. However, the sample of global companies in this study were categorized within the following nine industries: 28% (n = 7) finance and banking; 8% (n = 2) retail; 8% (n = 2) transportation; 12% (n = 3) environmental and waste; 20% (n = 5) healthcare; 4% (n = 1) each of insurance, construction, and household items; and, lastly, 12% (n = 3) classified as “other.” See Table 6 for percentage breakdowns.

Table 6: Represented Industries Within Sample

Industry	Sample Percentage	Number of Companies
Finance and Banking	28%	7
Healthcare	20%	5
Environmental and Waste	12%	3
Transportation	8%	2
Retail	8%	2
Construction	4%	1
Household Items	4%	1
Insurance	4%	1
Other	12%	3
Total	100%	25

When determining the top global companies, *Forbes* does not discriminate against the number of employees or locations. Therefore, the companies in this sample have a range from 1,008 to 160,552 employees with a mean of 25,744.68 (sd = 36,346.942). Additionally, the companies have as many as 9,518 different locations across the globe and as little as one office location. Lastly, the companies are located in a mean of 40.48 countries each (range = 1 to 100).

All of the companies have a Web site, and 14 offer it in more than one language. The average number of different languages was 3.92 (sd = 5.766) with a maximum at 21. Of the sample selection, seven companies did not have a Facebook account at the time of

this study, and the remaining 18 global company accounts have a mean of 338,162.39 fans (sd = 885,668.190) with a high of 3,734,534 fans and a low of a mere two fans.

The first research question was to explore the social media presence of the global companies – to see if they are engaging in additional social media networks outside of Facebook. Results indicate that 32% (n = 8) of companies have a blog, 56% (n = 14) are registered to a Twitter account, 48% (n = 12) have a YouTube account, 28% (n = 7) are active with a photo-sharing service and only 12% (n = 3) use a location-based service, as shown in Table 7. Of those with a Twitter account, the average number of followers was 25,776.28 (range = 136 to 335,858) and the average number of tweets was 5,158.08 (range = 6 to 10,379), which displays a range from non-active to extremely active. On YouTube, the sample’s average number of subscribers and video views was 4,880.68 and 731,918.08, respectively.

Table 7: Global Companies Social Media Presence

	Total No. Companies	Africa	Asia	Australia	Europe	North America	South America	Middle East
Blog	8 (32%)	0	0	0	3	5	0	0
Twitter	14 (56%)	0	0	1	3	7	2	1
YouTube	12 (48%)	0	0	0	3	6	2	1
Photo Sharing	7 (28%)	0	0	0	1	5	1	0
Location-Based	3 (12%)	0	0	0	0	2	1	0

Dialogic Principles

To investigate research question two, the Facebook profiles of the 25 random global companies were then evaluated for the presence of items representing Kent and Taylor's (1998) and Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas' (2009) dialogic principles: organizational disclosure, information dissemination and involvement. Social media sites, specifically Facebook, provide a convenient way for global companies to disclose information to the public.

Africa and Australia were eliminated from the following analyses, as both regions did not have Facebook pages for any of the 25 companies within this study's sample.

Organizational Disclosure

For full organizational disclosure, as discussed by Waters et. al (2009), organizations must make sure to provide a description and history of the organization, link to its Web site and provide visual cues to establish brand connection. Remaining open and transparent is key to gaining trust within a relationship.

As shown in Table 8, the majority of the global companies analyzed understood the importance of being transparent and open with their publics. As North American companies represented the largest share of the sample, it was assumed that they would also have the highest numbers in regard to Facebook accounts and the use of organizational disclosure. The European region has the second highest use of organizational disclosure, which could be due to many European countries possessing a western, modern viewpoint of social media adopted from its North American origins. Nearly three-fourths (72%) of all companies analyzed provided a company description on

their Facebook page, ranging from one-sentence summaries to multiple short paragraphs. Similarly, 68% of global companies listed the year founded and/or additional company history. However, only 36% of companies provided the mission statement. Linking to the company's Web site and using the company's logo as the main Facebook profile picture were both popular organizational disclosure strategies at 68% each. The Facebook cover photo is a relatively new concept when Facebook redesigned the social media's account pages. More than half (52%) of the companies used this feature to have a cover photo relating to the company, brand or industry. Lastly, as this is a study of international companies, it is expected that they would have more than one Facebook account for different regions. However, only 36% linked to the companies' additional Facebook pages.

Table 8: Use of Organizational Disclosure via Company Facebook Page

	Total No. Companies	Asia	Europe	North America	South America	Middle East
Description	18 (72%)	2	5	7	2	2
History	17 (68%)	2	4	7	2	2
Mission Statement	9 (36%)	1	4	4	0	0
Web site	17 (68%)	2	5	7	2	1
Logo/Profile Picture	17 (68%)	2	4	7	2	2
Cover Photo	13 (52%)	1	3	7	2	0
Additional Facebook Pages	9 (36%)	0	2	5	2	0

Information Dissemination

One rule of information dissemination is that organizations should make an “effort to include information of general value to publics” (Kent & Taylor, 1998) and use social media as a means to update the public with company news via press releases or entertain with multimedia and provide links with valuable information.

Table 9: Use of Information Dissemination via Company Facebook Page

	Total No. Company Posts	Asia	Europe	North America	South America	Middle East
Post Subject						
Product Specific	14 (15.2%)	0	0	14	0	0
Promotion Specific	18 (19.6%)	0	1	9	8	0
Company Specific	12 (13%)	0	2	8	2	0
Product/Industry Related	35 (38.1%)	0	8	21	2	4
Solicitation of Responses	7 (7.6%)	0	2	3	2	0
Unrelated to Company	6 (6.5%)	0	2	2	2	0
Multimedia Use						
None	44 (47.8%)	0	10	29	4	1
Photo	46 (50%)	0	5	26	12	3
Video	2 (2.2%)	0	0	2	0	0
Links						
None	19 (20.7%)	0	3	8	4	4
Company’s Web site	53 (57.6%)	0	5	37	11	0
External Media	7 (7.6%)	0	4	3	0	0
Other Social Media Networks	8 (8.7%)	0	3	5	0	0

Unrelated	5 (5.4%)	0	0	4	1	0
-----------	----------	---	---	---	---	---

While the companies from the Asian region did have a Facebook account and thus demonstrated organizational disclosure, they did not have any posts during the seven randomly selected days in August 2012 and cannot be analyzed for information dissemination, as there is none. Global companies do, in fact, use Facebook to distribute organizational news, including promotions and product information, as shown in Table 9. Only 7.6% of the company posts solicited responses from its fans, demonstrating a self-centered approach and a lack of interest to participate in two-way communication and dialogue.

Posting photographs, either alone or accompanying a text post, was the most popular use of multimedia featured on 50% of company posts. However, 47.8% of company posts did not use any form of multimedia and the remaining 2.2% of posts incorporated video. Not one company post used audio.

Facebook posts are meant to be short informational statements or questions. Linking to other Web sites on a post allows the reader (Facebook user) to receive more information and become more familiar with a company or brand. Of the total company posts, 57.6% linked to the company's Web site – either the homepage or a specific link. Only 8.7% of company posts linked to additional social media networks, such as Twitter or YouTube. The companies failed to promote their public relations efforts as only 7.6% of the posts linked to external media news items. Some posts (5.3%) provided links to unrelated information and nearly one-fifth (20.7%) of company posts did not link to anything.

Involvement/Interactivity

Interactivity is essential for organizations to develop relationships with stakeholders via social media. Without involving the public, social media and the use of the Internet merely becomes an online marketing tool and not a space for relationship building. Table 10 displays how the global regions compare among different categories of involvement and interactivity.

Table 10: Use of Involvement via Company Facebook Page

	Total No.	Asia	Europe	North America	South America	Middle East
Classification						
Active	11 (61%)	0	2	7	2	0
Inactive	7 (39%)	2	3	0	0	2
User Ability to Post on Page						
Yes	13 (72%)	0	1	7	2	1
No	5 (28%)	0	4	0	0	1
Ask a Question						
Yes	16 (17.4%)	0	4	8	4	0
No	76 (82.6%)	0	11	49	12	4

Of the companies within the sample that possess a Facebook account, only 61% are classified as active, i.e. posting on three or more days during the week. The success of interacting and staying involved with targeted publics relies on the company's ability to not only post frequently, but to also post engaging material. Additionally, whether or not

a fan has the ability to post on a company's Facebook page also determines the company's level of involvement/interactivity – something 28% of sampled companies do not allow on their Facebook pages. Creating dialogue with a public is due to a back-and-forth, two-way communication. While posting information regarding the company or product can yield comments and response from fans, asking a question sets the tone for greater feedback. Within 92 posts from the global companies, only 17% did ask a question and solicit feedback.

Providing information to their fans is very important in building and maintaining relationships. However, just as imperative as disseminating information within the dialogic loop is listening to and receiving information from the relationship's counterpart to complete the process. Out of the total posts coded for this study, 67% originated from common Facebook users. As shown in Table 11, their posts ranged from information seeking (36.5%) to complaints or compliments (13.9% and 7.2%, respectively). The most numerous user post subject was unsolicited information at 26.9%. An astounding 93.7% ($n = 195$) of user posts did not include any form of multimedia.

In regard to interactivity and feedback, if the company asked a question on a post it would receive an average of 326 comments – nearly five times more than when the company did not ask a question. Surprisingly, a question-based post would receive almost four times less “likes” ($M = 442$, $sd = 885.07$) than a non-soliciting post. When the user asked a question, the company responded within an average time of 12.42 hours ($sd = 31.724$).

Table 11: Use of User Interactivity via Company Facebook Page

	Total No.	Asia	Europe	North America	South America	Middle East
User Post Subject						
Information Seeking	76 (36.5%)	0	0	49	27	0
Unsolicited Information	56 (26.9%)	0	0	45	11	0
Emotional Expression	18 (8.7%)	0	0	17	1	0
Advocacy	7 (3.4%)	0	0	5	2	0
Complaints or Criticism	29 (13.9%)	0	0	17	12	0
Compliments or Praise	15 (7.2%)	0	0	14	1	0
Unrelated Information	7 (3.4%)	0	0	5	2	0
User Post Multimedia						
None	195 (93.7%)	0	0	140	55	0
Photo	12 (5.8%)	0	0	12	0	0
Video	1 (0.5%)	0	0	0	1	0
User Post Inquiry						
Yes	71 (34.1%)	0	0	47	24	0
No	137 (65.9%)	0	0	105	32	0
Company Response to User						
Yes	92 (44.2%)	0	0	62	30	0
No	116 (55.8%)	0	0	90	26	0
Average Company Response Time	12.42 (hours)					

Results shown in Table 12 on the following page indicate that Friday is the most frequently posted day with the mid-week coming in second: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 51, 51 and 50 posts each. Saturday and Sunday had a limited number of

company posts, which could be due to either the lack of employees available or the observation of religious days.

Table 12: Post Frequency

	Total No.	Asia	Europe	North America	South America	Middle East
Day in August						
5 - Sunday	17 (5.7%)	0	0	16	0	1
8 - Wednesday	51 (17%)	0	4	42	3	2
13 - Monday	37 (12.3%)	0	2	30	4	1
18 - Saturday	31 (10.3%)	0	0	21	10	0
23 - Thursday	50 (16.7%)	0	3	36	11	0
28 - Tuesday	51 (17%)	0	3	30	18	0
31 - Friday	63 (21%)	0	3	34	26	0

The next chapter discusses the implications of these results, including a breakdown of each dialogic principle strategy, the frequency of Facebook posts, company and user responsiveness, the public's use of Facebook and its use as a channel of communication, and how culture influences message subject. The manuscript concludes with the study's limitations, application for practice, and future recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Two research questions were examined in this study, used to expand the current international public relations and social media literature by incorporating the use of dialogic principles of relationship management: to see if they established a presence on Facebook and other social media networks and to investigate how global companies are integrating relationship development strategies into their Facebook pages.

Within the last few years, social media has seen a dramatic increase of users around the world. Because of technological advances and the blurring of boundaries, the world is becoming a global community. Global communications have made it essential for multinational corporations to develop and maintain a consistent worldwide identity and brand image. Social media is not limited to a certain industry either; in fact, finance and banking – what could be considered dull and unapt for the social world – was the most represented industry in this study. Additionally, the success of a company's use of social media does not depend on how large or financially prosperous it is, but instead on how much time and resources they can commit to monitoring the social environment and engaging with its customers or publics.

It is anticipated that international companies attempt to build relationships with publics all over the world speaking a multitude of languages. While all 25 companies did have a Web site with investor relations and other information, only slightly more than half offered the Web site in more than one language. This limits the dialogic loop of the

relationship, as the publics now have to use a translation service or don't even bother and move onto the next best option (i.e., a different company) to solve their problem. Some company Web sites offered one additional language aside from English, but the best approach is to have a version of the Web site in the official language of every country that the company has offices located.

Dialogic Principle: Organizational Disclosure

For full organizational disclosure, as discussed by Waters et. al (2009), organizations must make sure to provide a description and history of the organization, link to its Web site and provide visual cues to establish brand connection. Remaining open and transparent is key to gaining trust within a relationship. By analyzing the content of global companies' Facebook pages, this study found that companies from all examined regions (Africa and Australia were eliminated from the dialogic principles evaluations as both regions did not have Facebook pages for any of the sampled companies) clearly understand the importance of disclosure and transparency. They readily provide the necessary information on their Facebook pages to describe the company, visually represent the brand, and link to more information.

In 2011, Facebook launched the "Timeline" redesign of its users' profile pages, a new kind of profile that lets users highlight the photos, posts and life events that help tell his or her story (www.Facebook.com). Within the first quarter of 2012, Timeline became mandatory for all Facebook profiles, regardless of whether the page was for a public user or a company. The early days of the Facebook profile contained basic information: a name, photo, and university information, as Facebook was originally limited to college

students only. Over time, the Facebook profile evolved to better reflect how users communicate with friends and brands. Timeline is now a wider design and is much more visual. One feature of Timeline is the cover photo, which is the first thing a user sees when landing on a brand's Facebook page. It grabs the attention of and welcomes potential and current customers to the brand, visually representing its essence. User-friendly and instrumental at drawing more traffic, the Facebook Timeline allows a brand to establish more relationships with other businesses and users. Results indicated that global companies have embraced the new Timeline feature and are using its different tools to effectively disclose company information.

Dialogic Principle: Information Dissemination

One rule of information dissemination is that organizations should make an “effort to include information of general value to publics” (Kent & Taylor, 1998) and use social media as a means to update the public with company news via press releases or entertain with multimedia and provide links with valuable information. If a public user chooses to follow through with the action of liking a company on Facebook, then that is the first step of initiation to build a relationship. The action shows that the user is interested in the company and wants to find out more information. This is how Facebook becomes a great public relations tool to disseminate information. However, there needs to be a balance between constantly posting company information and taking the time (or giving the time) for customers to have input. Thermo Fisher Scientific, for example, repeatedly posts on its Facebook page, yet rarely receives user posts or comments and likes on the company's posts. During the seven randomly selected days, Thermo Fisher

Scientific posted multiple times each day on five different days and received very little comment feedback and not one user-generated post. The company might feel that it is practicing relationship building strategies and engaging publics, but in reality it is flooding their publics with one-way, unbalanced communication.

Now, with social media, the speed with which bad news can travel online is staggering, as everyone can get in on the conversation almost instantly. Public relations professionals no longer have a day or more to craft a statement. Instead, they have less than 24 hours to respond before the organizations' stakeholders begin to lose trust in the relationship. The speed at which companies respond and the type of content they disseminate determines the success of practicing this dialogic principle.

Dialogic Principle: Interactivity/Involvement

Interactivity is essential for organizations to develop relationships with stakeholders via social media. Without involving the public, social media and the use of the Internet merely becomes an online marketing tool and not a space for relationship building. While results did show that the companies would respond to questions or posts from users, they must also be aware that the conversation (dialogic loop) does not end there. Many times the companies would have an obligatory response and never go back to follow up that the issue was resolved with the customer or potential customer. This is similar to a client calling a company's office and once the first question was answered the company then hung up the phone without any further explanation – the dialogic loop is abruptly interrupted leading to stakeholder dissatisfaction and breakdown of the relationship.

Social media tools have opened up new possibilities for citizens to share their views in public and discuss with other citizens and people globally (Makinen & Kuira, 2008).

Frequency of Posts

For this study, an active Facebook page is classified as one in which the company posts at least three days during the week. An overactive Facebook page is when the company posts three or more days during the week and multiple times per day. FIBI Holding, a financial and banking organization from Israel, was the least active Facebook page and Thermo Fisher Scientific, an American healthcare organization, was the most active. However, the American retailer Coach was the most active and fairly balanced organization on Facebook among user and company posts.

If the user feels that the company is clogging up his or her Facebook newsfeed, then they are more likely to unlike the company and step back from the relationship. Conversely, if the company does not post frequently enough, then the user is more apt to not participate in active, engaging feedback and dialogue. Results also found that posting mid-week until the afternoon on Friday is the most common and most successful time for public interaction.

Responsiveness

During the coding procedure, it was found that Discover Credit Services has a great response time when dealing with customer inquiries. Not only does the company

respond within the same day (if not within only a few hours) for a majority of posts, but it also will follow up and go back to previous posts to ensure that the issue was resolved.

When the company posted a photo or asked a question, there was a dramatic increase in user feedback versus posting regarding a product or unrelated information. For example, the cleaning agent company Clorox had a relatively stable amount of customer feedback and interaction on its product or promotion posts. However, when it posted a photo with the accompanying text asking a question, the number of comments and likes drastically increased. The most important element of this example; however, was that Clorox would repeatedly go back and respond to some of the thousands of comments. The Clorox example is a great representation of the dialogic principle of interactivity in action in a real-world setting. Not only is the company participating in a back-and-forth dialogue, but it is also posting content that is engaging to the customer and not solely what the company wants to disperse.

The Public's Use of Facebook & Channel of Communication

In a rapidly changing technology world, consumers now expect to engage and connect with companies through social media. Writing an email or letter, calling a hotline number or visiting a Web site aren't the only options for consumers to reach out to a company. Similarly, the public now uses social media to seek out information, complain, or compliment a company. For example, a disgruntled customer sitting on the tarmac due to a delayed flight now tweets to the company to report a problem. On the positive side, the airline responded within minutes. On the negative side, an hour later when the same customer tweeted again about the situation (s)he received the same exact response from

the company. This shows that the company clearly demonstrates an interest in participating in social media; however, the strategy and execution is probably not effective and does not utilize the dialogic nature of Facebook to the fullest.

Message Subject and Culture

As expected, North American companies mostly posted in English while South American companies posted in Spanish. However, the European region produced an even mixture of both English and non-English posts, which demonstrates a greater understanding of the importance of reaching out to broader audiences.

Generally, advertising in China focuses on product attributes with less product-selling approaches (Chan, 1995). It is unfortunate that the Asian region did not have any Facebook posts during this study to verify previous Chinese messaging approaches. In the Italian and French approach, products are presented as luxurious and pieces of art. Not surprisingly, within the European region, the most frequently used post subject was product related. The American style of marketing typically reflects assertiveness, competitiveness, and a direct approach. Product appeal is frequently used with overstatements and exaggeration. This coincides with the results of having the most posts under the product specific and product related for entertainment or education. American companies are continually trying to promote what they have and what they do better, rather than soliciting the response of the consumer (a mere three posts).

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to bridge the gap between the academic and professional world of international public relations by expanding the stream of literature and incorporating a global aspect. Dialogic principle strategies of relationship management were used to explore how global companies use social network sites to build and foster relationships. Two research questions were examined in this study, used to expand the current international public relations and social media literature by incorporating the use of dialogic principles of relationship management: to see if they established a presence on Facebook and other social media networks and to investigate how global companies are integrating relationship development strategies into their Facebook pages. Results suggest that global companies are beginning to utilize the dialogic principles of information dissemination, disclosure and interactivity/involvement. Additionally, strategizing Facebook post messages to have a customer focus (i.e., asking questions, posting multimedia, providing company information) will yield greater feedback and interaction.

Limitations

The sample of global companies from this study was randomly selected from *Forbes* 2012 list of Global 2000 Leading Companies and thus could have had an impact on the study's results. Leading companies are the best performing organizations in their respected fields and, thus, have a greater opportunity of being ahead of the curve in regards to social media. While this study did investigate global companies, it could have utilized a more expansive population consisting of companies from all stages in

development and success from all over the world, not solely based on how *Forbes* ranked the organizations globally.

An additional limitation to this study was the selection of social media networks analyzed. As this is an international public relations study, a more global approach of social media should also have been utilized. For example, Facebook and Twitter is banned in China, and instead they use social networking sites such as Renren and Weibo. It is not surprising that China only represented 4% of this study's sample due to this governmental limitation. However, it should also be noted that as these are multinational corporations, a Chinese company could have a representative from its counterpart offices in a different country to manage such social media pages.

One section of this study's codebook briefly looked at whether or not the Facebook post messages displayed the use of Hon and Grunig's (1999) relationship quality outcomes: trust, satisfaction, commitment and control mutuality. However, a limitation in this research was that it did not code for the presence of *distrust* or *dissatisfaction*, which was seen numerous times during the coding process. An example of dissatisfaction was commonly seen when the user post was coded as having a negative tone and the subject was of a complaint or emotional expression.

Application for Practice

Companies realize the importance of becoming a part of this generational trend of social media, yet they do not understand the reasoning behind it, and, thus, do not develop a strategy for using social media to build relationships. There is a disconnect between companies' understanding of social media and the actions they are taking to

apply it to core business models and plans. Social media should work as a supplementary tool to a company's current business plan and successfully reaching its set goals.

No matter how much research or preparation is conducted, there are still many reasons for failure of various international public relations campaigns, including:

“Inconsistency in the messages conveyed to customers by staff at different levels and from different countries and cultures; different styles of presentation of corporate identity, brand and product image from different departments and country business units which can leave customers confused; a lack of coordination of messages, such as press releases, advertising campaigns, and changes in product specification or pricing across the various country markets; failure to appreciate the differences in the fields of perception of the sender and receiver” (Doole & Lowe, 2001, p. 335).

Communications are culturally sensitive and without attention to detail, they can be the source of many problems for firms offering their products throughout the world (Doole & Lowe, 2001).

While it is important to study the variations of cultures found around the world, an international public relations practitioner must also study his or her own. One cannot understand another culture without first fully knowing all of the components and characteristics that comprise his or her own. Instead, one would just be comparing things from an ethnocentric or misunderstood viewpoint. A public relations practitioner needs to be able to discern what is different in order to effectively and strategically alter the communications plan for an international campaign.

Public relations practitioners in multinational corporations should develop their public relations programs based on clear understanding of local cultures in order to practice effective and excellent communication (Choi & Cameron, 2005):

“All forms of international communication have a fundamental purpose which is to ensure that the intended messages (those which are part of the firm’s international strategy) are conveyed accurately between the sender and the receiver, and that the impact of unintentional messages (those which are likely to have an adverse effect on the firm’s market performance and reputation) are kept to a minimum. The communication process should be two-way, and the sender should always make provision for feedback to ensure that the receiver has understood the message as it was intended and has responded positively to it” (Doole & Lowe, 2001, p. 334).

Thus, effective public relations practice results more from continuous environmental monitoring and responsiveness than from strictly adhering to a strategic plan (Curtin & Gaither, 2007). The best practice is to set an overall international strategy, but allow the local markets to adapt the message within specific cultures and situations.

According to Nielsen (2012), a changing world requires changing approaches. In order to find success, companies will need to

“Adopt more flexible business models, manage risk across countries, balance local and global considerations, reconsider the role of emerging markets and continue to monitor the pulse of the global consumer as the pace of change rapidly increases” (Nielsen, 2012, p. 2).

Future Recommendations

Despite the limitations of this study, the results raised a number of issues that future research should address. As communications technology improves the speed with which information and knowledge can be accessed and transferred, so the world becomes smaller (Doole & Lowe, 2001). From this point, when does international public relations turn into the norm for all public relations? Will it be necessary to distinguish the two? Additionally, how will developing countries perceive public relations – will they adopt

the definition developed in the West or will they contribute their own ideas and theories to the research mix? More critical examinations of international public relations need to be conducted, going beyond the comparative approach. Public relations research needs to embrace critical modernism and address the complex experiences in the globalized world.

From a critical public relations standpoint, future scholarship may explore the ways in which global media ownership patterns interplay with the public relations messages of transnational corporations, and the connections between powerful global actors and the access to media agenda setting and issue framing secured by public relations practitioners (Pal & Dutta, 2008, p. 167). Another area of intriguing research for international public relations is to identify cultural myths and symbolism hidden in persuasive messages. Such culture-specific research will bring a new level of analysis to how cultures define, create and assess persuasive messages in public communication campaigns (Zaharna, 2001, p.147). Also, critical public relations scholars might explore the ways in which the public relations strategies of powerful global actors influence global and local policies, and the lives of locally situated publics.

Additionally, how will international public relations practitioners evaluate and measure their efforts? Something that could appear as unsuccessful in one culture could come across as extremely successful in another. Will it be possible to adopt evaluation methods from the excellence and other similar theories or will new methods need to be developed? As international public relations, as well as the technology world, continue to evolve, opportunities for new research are plentiful. This study makes a small contribution to the stream of relationship management theory and social media literature by adding a global element with results suggesting that global companies are beginning

to utilize the dialogic principles of information dissemination, disclosure, and interactivity/involvement, thus embracing the changing business and communication environment.

REFERENCES

- Bamossy, G.J. and Johansson, J. (2009). Global Communications in *Handbook of International Marketing*, (M. Kotabe and K. Helsen, eds.) Sage Publications.
- Bernays, E L. (1923). *Crystallizing Public Opinion*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation.
- Bortree, D.S. & Seltzer, T. (2009). Dialogic strategies and outcomes: An analysis of environmental advocacy groups' Facebook profiles. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 317-319.
- boyd, D. & Ellison, N. (2008). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 13, 210-230.
- Briones, R.L., Kuch, B. Liu, B.F. & Jin, Y. (2011). Keeping up with the digital age: How the American Red Cross uses social media to build relationships. *Public Relations Review*, 37, 37-43.
- Broom, G., Casey, S., & Ritchey, J. (1997). Toward a concept and theory of organization–public relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9, 83–98.
- Bruning, S.D., & Ledingham, J. A. (2000). Perceptions of relationships and evaluations of satisfaction: An exploration of interaction. *Public Relations Review*, 26, 85–96.

- Bruning, S. D., Dials, M., & Shirka, A. (2008). Using dialogue to build organization–public relationships, engage publics, and positively affect organizational outcomes. *Public Relations Review*, 34, 25-31.
- Cancel, A.E., Cameron, G.T., Sallot, L.M., & Mitrook, M.A. (1997). It Depends: A contingency theory of accommodation in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9, 31-63.
- Choi, Y. & Cameron, G.T. (2005). Overcoming ethnocentrism: the role of identity in contingent practice of international public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17, 171-189. Doi:10.1207/s1532754xjpr1702_6.
- Culbertson, H.M. & Chen, N. (1996). *International public relations: A comparative analysis*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Curtin, P. A., & Gaither, T. K. (2007). *International public relations: negotiating culture, identity, and power*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Doole, I., & Lowe, R. (2001). *International marketing communications. International marketing strategy: Analysis, development and implementation*. 307-344. Australia: Thomson Learning.
- du Gay et al. (1997) *Doing Cultural Studies: The story of the Sony Walkman* Milton Keynes: Open University; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Eyrich, N., Padman, M.L., & Sweetser, K.D. (2008). PR practitioners' use of social media tools and communication technology. *Public Relations Review*, 34, 412-414.

- Facebook (2012). Key Facts - Facebook Newsroom. *Facebook's latest news, announcements and media resources - Facebook Newsroom*. Retrieved October 18, 2012, from <http://newsroom.fb.com/Key-Facts>.
- Ferguson, M.A. (1984). Building theory in public relations: Interorganizational relationships. Paper presented to the Associate for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, FL.
- Forbes (2012). The World's Biggest Public Companies. *Information for the World's Business Leaders - Forbes.com*. Retrieved August 25, 2012, from <http://www.forbes.com/global2000/list/>
- Gaither, T.K., & Curtin, P.A. (2008). Examining the heuristic value of models of international public relations practice: a case study of the Arla Foods crisis. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 20, 115-137.
- Grunig, J. E., & Huang, Y. H. (2000). From organizational effectiveness to relationship indicators: Antecedents of relationships, public relations strategies, and relationship outcomes. In J. A. Ledingham & S. D. Bruning (Eds.), *Public relations as relationship management: A relational approach to public relations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Grunig, J.E. & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing Public Relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Grunig, J. E. (1992). What is excellence in management. In E. James & Grunig (Eds.), *Excellence in public relations and communication management* (pp. 219–249). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Grunig, L.A., Grunig, J.E., & Vercic, D. (1998). Are the IABC's excellence principles generic?: Comparing Slovenia and the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. *Journal of Communication Management*, 2, 335-356.
- Grunig, J.E. (2006). Furnishing the edifice: Research on public relations as a strategic management function. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 18, 151-176.
- Huang, Y. H. (1997). Public relations strategies, relational outcomes, and conflict management strategies. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park.
- Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hofstede, G., & Bond, M. H. (1987). The Confucius connection: From cultural roots to economic growth. *Organizational Dynamics*, 16, 4-21.
- Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Holtzhausen, D.R. (2007). Activism. In E. L. Toth (Ed.), *The future of excellence in public relations and communication management: Challenges for the next generation* (pp. 357-379). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Hon, L. C., & Grunig, J. E. (1999). *Measuring relationships in public relations*. Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations.
- Ihator, A. (2000). Understanding the cultural patterns of the world – an imperative in implementing strategic international PR programs. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 45, 38-44.

- Ingenhoff, D. & Koelling, A.M. (2009). The potential of Web sites as a relationship building tool for charitable fundraising NPOs. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 66-73.
- Kaplan, A. & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53, 59-68.
- Kent, M.L. & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the world wide Web. *Public Relations Review*, 24, 321-334.
- Kent, M.L., Taylor, M. & White, W.J. (2003). The relationships between Web site design and organizational responsiveness to stakeholders. *Public Relations Review*, 29, 63-77.
- Kent, M.L. & Taylor, M. (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 28, 21-37.
- Kent, M.L. & Taylor, M. (2007). Beyond excellence: Extending the generic approach to international public relations, the case of Bosnia. *Public Relations Review*, 33, 10-20.
- Ki, E. J., & Hon, L. C. (2007). Testing the linkages among the organization–public relationship and attitude and behavioral intentions. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19, 1–23.
- Kietzmann, J.H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I.P. & Silvestre, B.S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*, 54, 241-251.
- Kim, H. S. (2007). A multilevel study of antecedents and a mediator of employee-organization relationships. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19, 167–197.

- Kotabe, M., & Helsen, K. (2009). Global Communications. The SAGE Handbook of International Marketing, 374-397. London: SAGE Publications. Chapter 19, Global Communications, Gary J. Bamossy and Johnny K. Johansson.
- Ledingham, J. A. (2001). Government–community relationships: Extending the relational perspective of public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 27, 285–295.
- Levenshus, A. (2010) Online relationship management in a presidential campaign: A case study of the Obama campaign's management of its internet-integrated grassroots effort. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 22, 313 — 335.
- Nunez, C., Mahdi, R., & Popma, L. (2007). *Intercultural sensitivity: from denial to intercultural competence*. Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum.
- Mäkinen, M., and Kuira, M. W., (2008). Social media and post-election crisis in Kenya, *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 13, 328-335.
- Men, L.R. & Tsai, W-H.S. (In Press). How companies cultivate relationships with publics on social network sites: Evidence from China and the United States. *Public Relations Review*.
- Molleda, J. (2008). Contextualized qualitative research in Venezuela: Coercive isomorphic pressures of the socioeconomic and political environments on public relations practices. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 20, 49-70.
- Moss, D., MacManus, T., & Verčič, D. (1997). *Public relations research: an international perspective*. London: International Thomson Business Press.
- Moss, D., Powell, M., & DeSanto, B. (2010). Public relations cases: International perspectives. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Nielsen. (2011). State of the media: The social media report, Q3.

- Neuendorf, K. A. (2002). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Newsom, D., Scott, A., & Turk, J. (1989). *This is PR: The Realities of Public Relations*, 4th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Newsom, D. (2008). Public relations and integrated communication in Stacks, D. W. & Salwen, M. B. (2nd ed.) *An integrated approach to communication theory and research*. New York: Routledge.
- The New York Times, (1998).
<http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/08/16/specials/bernays-obit.html>
- Ni, L. (2009). Strategic role of relationship building: Perceived links between employee-organization relationships and globalization strategies. *Public Relations Research*, 21, 100-120.
- Pal, M. & Dutta, M.J. (2008). Public relations in a global context: The relevance of critical modernism as a theoretical lens. *Public Relations Research*, 20, 159-179.
- Park, H. & Reber, B. (2008). Relationship building and the use of Web sites: How *Fortune 500* companies use their Web sites to build relationships. *Public Relations Reivew*, 34, 409-411.
- Public Relations Definition: PRSA Official Statement. (2012). *Public Relations Resources & PR Tools for Communications Professionals: Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)*. Retrieved November 12, 2012, from <http://www.prsa.org/AboutPRSA/PublicRelationsDefined>
- Qualman, E. (2011). *Socialnomics: how social media transforms the way we live and do business*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

- Reed, J.M. (1989). International media relations: Avoid self-binding. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 34, 12-15.
- Rhee, Y. (2002). Global public relations: A cross-cultural study of the excellence theory in South Korea. *Public Relations Research*, 14, 159-184.
- Rybalko, S. & Seltzer, T. (2010). Dialogic communication in 140 characters or less: How Fortune 500 companies engage stakeholders using Twitter. *Public Relations Review*, 36, 336-341.
- Seltzer, T. & Mitrook, M.A. (2007). The dialogic potential of Weblogs in relationship building. *Public Relations Review*, 33, 227-229.
- Semiocast. (2012). Twitter reaches half a billion accounts — More than 140 millions in the U.S. Retrieved October 21, 2012, from http://semiocast.com/publications/2012_0
- Sriramesh, K., & Vercic, D. (2003). A Theoretical Framework for Global Public Relations Research and Practice. *The Global Public Relations Handbook: Theory, Research, and Practice*. 1-19. Mahwah, NJ: Taylor & Francis.
- Larcker, D.F., Larcker, S.M., & Tayan, B. (2012). What do corporate directors and senior managers know about social media? *The Conference Board*, Stanford University Graduate School of Business.
- Sweetser, K.D. & Metzgar, E. (2007). Communicating during crisis: Use of blogs as a relationship management tool. *Public Relations Review*, 33, 340-342.
- Taylor, M., Kent, M.L., & White, W.J. (2001). How activist groups are using the Internet to build relationships. *Public Relations Review*, 27, 263-284.
- Twitter. (2012). Retrieved October 18, 2012, from <https://twitter.com/about>

- Vercic, D.; Grunig, L.A.; Grunig, J.E. (1996). Global and Specific Principles of Public Relations: Evidence from Slovenia. In CULBERTSON, H.M.; CHEN, N. (eds.) International Public Relations: A Comparative Analysis. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., pp. 37-39.
- Wakefield, R. (2008). Theory of international public relations, the Internet, and activism a personal reflection. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 20, 138-157. Doi:10.1080/10627260701727069.
- Waters, R.D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A. & Lucas, J. (2009). Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook. *Public Relations Review*, 35, 102-106.
- Wilcox, D.L., Cameron, G.T., Ault, P. & Agee, W.K. (2007). *Public relations strategies and tactics* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education.
- Wrench, J. S. Thomas-Maddox, C., Richmond, V.P., & McCronskey, J.C. (2008). *Quantitative research methods for communication: a hands-on approach*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wurtz, E. (2006). Intercultural communication on Web sites: A cross-cultural analysis of Web sites from high-context cultures and low-context cultures. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11, 274–299.
- Yang, S. U. (2007). An integrated model for organization—public relational outcomes, organizational reputation, and their antecedents. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 19, 91–121.
- Zaharna, R.S. (2001). “In-awareness” approach to international public relations. *Public Relations Review*, 27, 135-148.

CODEBOOK

Part 1: General Information and Social Media Environment

1. Forbes Ranking _____

2. Country of Origin

1= Australia	6= Saudi Arabia	11= Ireland
2= Switzerland	7= China	12= Chile
3= Italy	8= Netherlands	13= Israel
4= Brazil	9= Japan	14= South Africa
5= USA	10= Germany	

3. Region of Origin

1= Africa	5= Europe
2= Antarctica	6= North America
3= Asia	7= South America
4= Australia	8= Middle East

4. How many different locations does the company have? _____

5. Within how many different countries? _____

6. What is the industry of the company?

1= Finance and Banking	7= Healthcare	
2= Food and Drink	8= Insurance	
3= Retail	9= Construction	
4= Transportation	10= Household Items	
5= Environmental and Waste	11=	Other
6= Electronics		

7. Year Founded _____

8. Number of Employees _____

9. What is the company's yearly sales (in USD)?

1= \$500-750 M	3= \$1-25 B	5= \$51-75 B
2= \$751-999 M	4= \$26-50 B	6= \$76-100 B

7= \$101-125 B

9= \$151-175 B

8= \$126-150 B

10= \$176-200 B

10. Does the company have a Web site?

1= Yes 2= No

10a. Is the company's main Web site offered in multiple languages?

1= Yes 2= No

10b. If yes, how many different languages? _____

11. Does the company have a blog, either hosted on the company's Web site or via a separate platform?

1= Yes 2= No

11a. If the blog is hosted outside of the company's Web site, which platform does it use?

0 = Not Applicable

3= Tumblr

1= Blogger

4= Web site

2= Wordpress

5 = Other

12. Does the company have a Twitter account?

1= Yes 2= No

12a. If yes:

How many followers? _____

How many are they following? _____

How many current tweets? _____

13. Does the company have a YouTube account?

1= Yes 2= No

13a. If yes:

How many subscribers? _____

How many video views? _____

14. Does the company have a photo sharing account?

1= Yes 2= No

14a. If yes, which platform does the company use?

0 = Not Applicable

3= Pinterest

1= Photobucket

4 = Instagram

2= Flickr

5= Other

15. Does the company use a location-based/check-in service?

1= Yes 2= No

2 = Inactive

25. Does the Facebook link to and/or promote its other social media networks?

1= Yes 2= No

Part 4a: Dialogic Loop and Generation of Return Visits

26. Does the company allow users to post on their Facebook page?

1= Yes 2= No

Part 4b: Dialogic Loop and Generation of Return Visits (To Be Repeated for Each Post Separately)

27. What day in August was it posted?

1 = 5 (Sunday)

2 = 8 (Wednesday)

3 = 13 (Monday)

4 = 18 (Saturday)

5 = 23 (Thursday)

6 = 28 (Tuesday)

7 = 31 (Friday)

28. In what language is the post written?

1 = English

2 = Spanish

3 = French

4 = Italian

5 = Chinese

6 = Hebrew

7 = Arabic

8 = German

9 = Portuguese

10 = Japanese

11 = Dutch

12 = Other

29a-c. How many of the following does the post have?

Likes _____

Shares _____

Comments _____

30. Who is the origin of the post?

1 = Company

2 = User/Fan**

***If user, skip to number 36.*

If company:

31. What is the subject of the post?

1 = Product Specific

2 = Promotion Specific (Sale or other event)

3 = Company Specific (This could be a press release, annual or quarterly report, announcements, etc.)

4 = Product/Industry-Related Educational or Entertainment

5 = Solicitation of Responses

6 = Unrelated to company

32. Does the post use multimedia?

1 = No

2 = Photo

3 = Video

4 = Audio

33. Does the post provide links to the following items?

0 = No link

1 = Company's Web site

2 = External Media News Items About Company

3 = Link to the Company's FAQs Page

4 = Link to other social media network

5 = Unrelated

34. Does the post ask a question?

1 = Yes

2 = No

35. What is the general tone of the post?

1 = Negative: The post expresses or implies disagreement and is not enthusiastic.

2 = Positive: The post expresses or implies affirmation and agreement. The post shows optimism and confidence with no possibility of doubt.

3 = Neutral: The post has no strongly marked positive or negative characteristics.

If user:

36. What is the subject of the post?

1 = Information Seeking

2 = Unsolicited Information

3 = Emotional Expression

4 = Advocacy

5 = Complaints or Criticism

6 = Compliments or Praise

7 = Unrelated Information to Brand/Company

37. Does the post use multimedia?

1 = No

2 = Photo

3 = Video

4 = Audio

38. Does the post ask a question?

1= Yes 2= No

39. What is the general tone of the post?

1 = Negative: The post expresses or implies disagreement and is not enthusiastic.

2 = Positive: The post expresses or implies affirmation and agreement. The post shows optimism and confidence with no possibility of doubt.

3 = Neutral: The post has no strongly marked positive or negative characteristics.

40. Regardless of the post subject, does the company respond?

1= Yes 2= No

41. If the company does respond to the post, in what language?

0 = No Response

1 = English

2 = Spanish

3 = French

4 = Italian

5 = Chinese

6 = Hebrew

7 = Arabic

8 = German

9 = Portuguese

10 = Japanese

11 = Dutch

12 = Other

42. If the company does respond to the post, what is the difference in time between the first post and the company's response?

0 = No Response

_____ (#) Hours or Days (Circle One)

43. Does the Facebook post demonstrate a relationship quality outcome – trust, commitment, control mutuality and satisfaction? Definitions of each outcome are below along with an example.

1 = Trust only

2 = Commitment Only

3 = Control Mutuality Only

4 = Satisfaction Only

5 = Two Quality Outcomes

51 = Trust and Commitment

52 = Trust and Control Mutuality

53 = Trust and Satisfaction

- 54 = Commitment and Control Mutuality
- 55 = Commitment and Satisfaction
- 56 = Control Mutuality and Satisfaction
- 6 = Three or More Quality Outcomes
- 7 = Neither, the post is neutral.
- 8 = The post is an image with no text.
- 9 = The post is unclear.

The relationship quality outcomes can be classified as:

Trust: Trust is defined as “one party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party” (Hon&J. E. Grunig, 1999, p. 3). The messages within the posts, as well as responding comments to each, imply integrity, competence and dependability. Integrity is the belief that the other party is fair and just. Dependability refers to consistency between verbal statements and behavior. Competence is the degree to which parties believe the other has the ability to do what it says it will do (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999).

Commitment: Commitment is defined as “the extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote” (Hon & J. E. Grunig, 1999, p. 3). It consists of two underlying dimensions: continuance and affective commitment. Continuance commitment has to do with a certain line of action (i.e., behavior), whereas affective commitment is an emotional orientation (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Control Mutuality: Control mutuality refers to “the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another” (Hon&J. E. Grunig, 1999, p. 3).

Satisfaction: Satisfaction represents whether one party feels favorably toward the other (Hon&J. E. Grunig, 1999). A satisfying relationship produces more benefits than costs.

Using the automotive company Toyota as an example, the following post from its Facebook page shows how to distinguish between the different relationship variables.

Toyota USA Thanks to you, we’re about to hit our one million fans mark. Share your favorite photo of you and your Toyota on our wall, and it may be included in our festivities!

“Thanks to you” shows that Toyota is committed to its customers and the success they yield the company.

Comment: (Name Removed) Our Avalon is our 3rd Toyota, we’ve had it since 2001 and never once had a problem with it. We’ll certainly buy another when ready!

This post demonstrates multiple relationship variables. “We’ll certainly buy another” shows that the customer trusts in the brands products, and the customer believes the company to be dependable. “Never once had a problem” shows that they are also satisfied, as having the car has provided more benefits than costs or problems.