



# Social Media And The Practice Of Public Relations In Mass Media Organizations

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**ABSTRACT**

The integration of social media platforms has redefined how mass media organizations communicate with their audiences. This paradigm shift goes beyond mere dissemination, embracing a two-way symmetrical communication model where organizations actively engage with their audience. Social media serves as a real-time conduit for disseminating news, responding to queries, and fostering meaningful dialogues. Traditionally adept at setting the agenda, mass media organizations extend their influence through strategic use of social media. By curating content, emphasizing specific narratives, and participating in trending discussions, these entities actively shape public discourse and influence the issues that capture the attention of the audience. The real-time nature of social media has altered the landscape of crisis communication. Mass media organizations now navigate through the challenges of managing crises in the digital realm, where information spreads rapidly. Social media serves as a powerful tool for mitigating reputational damage, correcting misinformation, and providing timely updates during critical situations. Despite its advantages, the integration of social media into PR practices brings forth challenges. Information overload, privacy concerns, and the rapid dissemination of misinformation pose intricate hurdles. Mass media organizations grapple with the need for instant responsiveness while ensuring accuracy and reliability in the information they share. Strategies employed by mass media organizations encompass the spectrum of PR practices. From agenda-setting to fostering employee advocacy, organizations adapt strategically to the nuances of each social media platform. Data-driven decision-making, facilitated by social media analytics, becomes paramount in assessing the impact of PR campaigns, understanding audience sentiment, and refining communication strategies. Beyond organizational accounts, social media platforms offer an avenue for employee advocacy. Mass media organizations leverage the authentic voices of their staff to enhance brand representation. PR efforts guide employees in aligning their personal narratives with the organization's overarching messaging, fostering a diverse and authentic brand image. In conclusion, the integration of social media into the practice of public relations within mass media organizations signifies a fundamental shift in communication dynamics. The opportunities presented by these platforms demand strategic adaptation, while the challenges necessitate a nuanced approach. As organizations navigate this dynamic landscape, the synergy between social media and PR emerges as a cornerstone for effective communication, audience engagement, and reputation management in the ever-evolving domain of mass media.

**Keywords:****Social Media, Public Relations, Mass Media, Organizations****Introduction**

"Social media puts the 'public' into public relation and the 'market' into marketing." (Brogan, n.d.). Public relation (PR) is now really combined with the public. Nowadays, social media has changed the patterns of PR practice. In a sense, since the emergence of social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, PR practitioners no longer serve as information sources. PR has become more integrated due to the cooperation between the public and mass media organizations. A large number of studies have been done on the influence and use of social media in PRs. Many of them come up with that social media is the platform and carrier of public communication campaigns and strategic communication (Wang, 2015), which mostly are talking about communication. The usage of social media has brought significant changes to PR practice in communication.

In recent years, the integration of social media has transformed the traditional practices of public relations within mass media organizations. Social media platforms serve as powerful tools for disseminating information, shaping narratives, and engaging with diverse audiences in real-time. Public relations professionals now navigate a dynamic digital landscape where the speed of communication is unparalleled. They leverage platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to not only broadcast messages but also to actively participate in conversations, monitor feedback, and address concerns promptly. Strategies in this context involve crafting compelling and shareable content, utilizing multimedia elements, and fostering a transparent and authentic online presence. Mass media organizations harness social media to amplify their reach, connect with niche audiences, and gauge public sentiment effectively. However, this intersection comes with challenges, including the need for rapid response in crisis situations, managing the potential for misinformation to spread quickly, and maintaining a consistent brand image across diverse digital channels. Public Relations professionals play a crucial role

in mitigating risks, building trust, and adapting strategies to the ever-changing social media landscape.

**Conceptual Review****The Concept Social media**

The concept of social media refers to a range of technologies and platforms that enable people to connect, communicate, and share information. This includes platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and many others. Manuel Castells defines social media as "a set of technological platforms that allow users to create and share content with others, in real time and with limited barriers." Danah Boyd defines social media as "digital platforms that allow users to create and share content... Another important scholar Clay Shirky defines social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content."

The definition of social media also includes some key terms. For example, the term "user-generated content" refers to content that is created and shared by users themselves. Social media has become a ubiquitous part of modern life, and it is often seen as a double-edged sword, with both positive and negative implications for individuals and society.

**Social media and mass media organization**

As social media has become a major force in shaping public opinion and perception, its role in mass media organizations has also become increasingly important.

"Social media has fundamentally changed the way that media organizations produce and distribute content. It has also created new ways for audiences to engage with media, as well as new opportunities and challenges for media organizations." (Chadwick and Howard, 2013) Another scholar, Benkler 2014 said: "Social media is transforming the public sphere, as well as the organization of civil society and politics, in fundamental ways." Finally, Siva

Vaidhyathan 2013, a media studies scholar, said: "Social media is not just a set of tools or services; it is a set of values, a worldview, and a whole way of approaching human relationships."

Here are some of the ways that social media is being used by mass media organizations:

- Using social media to engage with audiences: Mass media organizations are increasingly using social media platforms to connect with their audiences, solicit feedback, and build communities around their content.
- Promoting content: Social media is a powerful tool for promoting the content produced by mass media organizations. Many mass media organizations now have dedicated social media teams that work to amplify their content across different platforms.
- Generating revenue: Social media can also be a valuable tool for generating revenue for mass media organizations. For example, some organizations use social media to sell subscriptions or generate advertising revenue.
- Audience research: Social media platforms provide a wealth of data that can be used by mass media organizations to better understand their audiences and their needs. This information can then be used to inform editorial decisions and improve the organization's content strategy.

Overall, social media has become an essential tool for mass media organizations, and its use is only likely to grow in the future.

### Public Relations overview

The field of PR has evolved over time, and today there are many different types of PR, such as corporate PR, government PR, and non-profit PR. In all cases, the goal is to manage the relationship between the organization and its publics, the organization image, among others. Many scholars have defined Public relations in many ways. For instance

Harold Burson, public relations pioneer, "Public relations is the management function that evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies

and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and plans and executes a program of action to earn public understanding and acceptance." James E. Grunig, "Public relations is the management function that identifies, creates, monitors, and adjusts an organization's culture and practices to reflect and support the way the organization wishes to be perceived by the publics it serves."

"Public relations is a management function that is concerned with the interface between an organization and its publics, and that helps an organization develop mutual understanding, trust, respect, and credibility with those publics." Robert L. Heath. "Public relations is a management process of anticipating, analyzing, interpreting, and influencing public opinion to achieve organization goals." - Scott M. Cutlip.

There are a number of important concepts in the field of public relations,

- One concept is "crisis communication", which refers to the strategies and tactics used to respond to a crisis or negative publicity. Another important concept is "stakeholder management," which involves identifying and building relationships with the people and organizations who can affect or be affected by the organization's actions.
- Another important concept is "issues management," which is about anticipating and managing potential issues or problems before they become crises.
- Finally, there is the concept of "reputation management," which is about maintaining and protecting the image of the organization.

PR is often seen as the bridge between an organization and its stakeholders, such as customers, investors, employees, and the media. The goal of PR is to build and maintain positive relationships with these stakeholders, and to promote the organization in a positive light.

### Public Relations in mass media organization

Public relations in mass media organizations plays a key role in helping to shape the public's perception of the media organization and its

content. PR departments in mass media organizations use a variety of strategies and tactics to achieve this, such as:

- **Building relationships with journalists:** One of the key roles of PR in mass media organizations is to build and maintain relationships with journalists, in order to promote the organization's content and ensure that it is represented accurately and fairly in the media.
- **Managing crisis communications:** PR departments in mass media organizations often have to deal with crisis situations, such as negative stories about the organization or its employees.
- **Promoting the organization's brand:** PR departments in mass media organizations work to promote the organization's brand and reputation through various tactics, such as social media campaigns, press releases, and events.
- **Coordinating with other departments:** In mass media organizations, PR departments often work closely with other departments, such as marketing, sales, and editorial, to ensure that all messaging is consistent and aligned with the organization's goals.
- **Monitoring and analyzing media coverage:** Another important task for PR departments in mass media organizations is to monitor and analyze the coverage of that organization, in order to gauge public perception and identify any issues that need to be addressed. This may involve tracking social media conversations, analyzing sentiment, and identifying trends.

With all of these responsibilities, PR departments in mass media organizations play a

crucial role in protecting and promoting the organization's reputation.

### **Social media and Public Relations in mass media organization**

The relationship between social media and public relations (PR) is a key area of study. In the field of PR, social media is often seen as a powerful tool for building and managing relationships with key stakeholders, including customers, investors, and the media. Some scholars have argued that social media is a game-changer for the PR industry, as it allows organizations to communicate directly with their stakeholders, rather than relying on traditional media channels. Others have argued that social media poses challenges for PR practitioners, such as the difficulty of controlling the message and the potential for negative publicity.

Public relations departments in media organizations use social media for a variety of purposes. These include:

- - **Promoting content and engaging with audiences:** PR departments use social media to promote the content produced by the organization, such as news articles, podcasts, and videos. They also use social media to engage with their audiences, responding to comments and questions, and building relationships.
- - **Monitoring and analyzing public opinion:** PR departments use social media to monitor public opinion about the organization and its content. They analyze this information to inform their future strategies and to identify potential issues or crises.
- - **Building relationships with journalists and influencers:** Public relations departments in media organizations use social media to connect with their audiences, build relationships with journalists and influencers, monitor public opinion, and manage crises.

As you can see, social media plays a crucial role in the work of public relations departments in media organizations. It allows them to reach a wider audience, engage with their followers, and stay on top of the latest trends and public

sentiment. It also helps them to manage crises and protect the reputation of the organization. Social media is a powerful tool for PR, but it also comes with some challenges, that public relations departments in media organizations face when using social media. These include:

- - The fast pace of social media: It can be difficult to keep up with the ever-changing landscape of social media, and to respond quickly to events and conversations.
- - The risk of negative publicity: Social media can be a double-edged sword, and there is always the risk that a social media campaign could backfire or result in negative publicity for the organization.
- - The need for authenticity: In the age of social media, audiences are looking for authenticity from the organizations they follow. This means that PR departments need to strike the right balance between promoting the organization and being transparent and honest with their followers.
- - The threat of fake news and misinformation: The spread of fake news and misinformation on social media can be a major challenge for PR departments, who need to ensure that their messages are accurate and trustworthy.

On social media, organizations need to be authentic and transparent in order to build trust with their stakeholders. However, they also need to be careful about what they say, as any negative comments or information can be amplified on social media and damage their reputation.

## Challenges

The challenges of social media use in the practice of public relations within mass media organizations are multifaceted and require strategic navigation. Some prominent challenges include:

### 1. Information Overload:

The constant flow of information on social media can lead to information overload. PR professionals may struggle to filter through vast amounts of data, affecting the precision and relevance of their communication.

### 2. Rapid Spread of Misinformation:

Social media enables the swift dissemination of information, both accurate and inaccurate. Mass media organizations must navigate the challenge of correcting false narratives, managing misinformation, and maintaining accuracy in their communications.

### 3. Crisis Amplification:

While social media is crucial for crisis communication, it also has the potential to amplify crises rapidly. Managing and mitigating the impact of negative events becomes more challenging in the digital realm where misinformation can spread swiftly.

### 4. Maintaining Consistency Across Platforms:

Mass media organizations often engage with diverse audiences on various social media platforms. Ensuring consistent messaging and brand image across these platforms can be challenging, requiring careful management and coordination.

### 5. Privacy Concerns:

Balancing the desire for transparency with respect for privacy is a complex challenge. PR professionals must navigate the ethical considerations of sharing information on social media, especially in an era where privacy concerns are paramount.

### 6. Real-time Responsiveness:

Social media operates in real-time, demanding swift responses. PR professionals must balance the need for speed with the necessity of crafting thoughtful and accurate responses, particularly in crisis situations.

### 7. Negative Feedback and Trolling:

Social media platforms can be breeding grounds for negative comments and trolling. PR teams must develop strategies to address criticism

constructively and manage the potential impact on the organization's reputation.

### 8. Algorithm Changes:

Social media platforms frequently update their algorithms, affecting the visibility of content. Adapting to these changes and ensuring that PR messages reach the intended audience becomes an ongoing challenge.

### 9. Employee Advocacy Risks:

While employee advocacy can be beneficial, it also introduces the risk of conflicting messages or inadvertent disclosure of sensitive information. Managing and guiding employee advocacy efforts requires careful oversight to avoid potential complications.

### 10. Measuring ROI:

Quantifying the return on investment (ROI) of social media efforts can be challenging. PR professionals need to develop robust metrics to assess the impact of their campaigns, considering factors beyond simple engagement numbers.

Navigating these challenges requires a strategic and adaptive approach to social media use in the practice of public relations within mass media organizations. It involves continuous monitoring, proactive planning, and a nuanced understanding of the complexities introduced by the digital landscape.

## Factors that contribute to the Challenges of social media use in the practice of public relations in mass media organizations

Several factors contribute to the challenges of social media use in the practice of public relations within mass media organizations:

### 1. Speed of Information:

The rapid pace of information dissemination on social media can make it challenging for mass media organizations to keep up and respond in a timely manner, especially in crisis situations.

### 2. Volume of Data:

The sheer volume of data generated on social media platforms can lead to information overload. PR professionals may struggle to sift through vast amounts of information to identify relevant trends or issues.

**3. Misinformation and Fake News:**

Social media is prone to the rapid spread of misinformation and fake news. Mass media organizations must grapple with the challenge of correcting false narratives and maintaining accuracy in their communications.

**4. Diversity of Platforms:**

Mass media organizations often engage with diverse audiences across various social media platforms. Ensuring consistent messaging and brand image across these platforms requires careful management and coordination.

**5. Privacy Concerns:**

Balancing the need for transparency with respect for privacy is a complex challenge. PR professionals must navigate the ethical considerations of sharing information on social media while safeguarding individuals' privacy.

**6. Negative Feedback and Trolling:**

Social media can be a breeding ground for negative comments and trolling. PR teams must develop strategies to address criticism constructively and manage the potential impact on the organization's reputation.

**7. Algorithm Changes:**

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**9. Crisis Amplification:**

While social media is crucial for crisis communication, it also has the potential to amplify crises. PR professionals must carefully navigate the fine line between addressing issues transparently and

preventing the escalation of negative narratives.

**10. Measuring ROI:**

Quantifying the return on investment (ROI) of social media efforts can be challenging. PR professionals need to develop robust metrics to assess the impact of their campaigns, considering factors beyond simple engagement numbers.

Understanding and addressing these factors are essential for mass media organizations to navigate the challenges posed by social media in the practice of public relations effectively. It requires a strategic approach, continuous monitoring, and adaptability to the evolving nature of the digital landscape.

**Theoretical Framework**

Agenda-Setting Theory, developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, posits that media outlets have the power to influence the public agenda by selecting and emphasizing certain issues, topics, or stories. This theory can be closely connected to social media use in the practice of public relations within mass media organizations in several ways:

**1. Issue Salience on Social Media:**

Mass media organizations can leverage social media to set the agenda by strategically highlighting specific issues, stories, or narratives. Through curated content, timely posts, and engagement strategies, they can shape what becomes salient in the public discourse.

**2. Content Curation and Framing:**

PR professionals can use social media platforms to curate and frame content that aligns with the organizational agenda. By carefully selecting how information is presented and emphasizing certain aspects, they influence the public's perception of issues and events.

**3. Response to Current Events:**

Social media enables real-time communication. Mass media organizations can use this immediacy to respond swiftly to current events, emphasizing their interpretation of the news and guiding public attention toward specific perspectives, aligning with their agenda.

#### **4. Influencing Public Opinion:**

Through the sharing and promotion of content on social media, mass media organizations can directly influence public opinion. The ability to shape narratives and control the flow of information contributes to their role as agenda-setters within the digital space.

#### **5. Engagement and Feedback Loop:**

Social media platforms provide a two-way communication channel. Mass media organizations can gauge public reactions, opinions, and concerns in real-time. This feedback loop allows them to adapt their agenda-setting strategies based on audience responses.

#### **6. Navigating Virality and Trending Topics:**

Social media often amplifies certain topics, making them viral or trending. Mass media organizations can strategically engage with these trends, ensuring that their agenda aligns with and contributes to the prevailing conversations on these platforms.

#### **7. Visibility and Shareability:**

Crafting shareable content on social media increases the visibility of specific messages. Mass media organizations can design content that aligns with their agenda and encourages audience sharing, thereby expanding the reach and influence of their chosen topics.

#### **8. Crisis Communication and Agenda Control:**

During crises, social media becomes a crucial platform for agenda-setting. Mass media organizations can employ strategic crisis communication to manage the narrative, control the agenda, and shape public perceptions, minimizing reputational damage.

In essence, the use of social media in public relations within mass media organizations aligns with Agenda-Setting Theory by providing a dynamic platform to actively participate in the agenda-setting process. It empowers organizations to influence public attention, guide discussions, and strategically shape the narrative in alignment with their communication goals. The interactive and real-time nature of social media enhances

the effectiveness of agenda-setting strategies in the digital age.

### **Discussion**

In the dynamic realm of mass media, the integration of social media has become paramount in the practice of public relations. This discussion explores the multifaceted role of social media in shaping communication strategies, fostering engagement, and navigating the challenges faced by mass media organizations. Mass media organizations, traditionally agenda-setters, now extend their influence through social media platforms. By strategically curating content and engaging with trending topics, they shape public discourse and maintain a prominent role in setting the agenda. Social media's real-time nature transforms the speed of communication for mass media PR. Whether responding to breaking news, disseminating information, or engaging with the audience, the immediacy of platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The integration of social media in crisis communication is pivotal. Mass media organizations leverage these platforms to address issues promptly, correct misinformation, and manage reputational damage in a landscape where crises can unfold and escalate rapidly. While social media offers unparalleled opportunities, it brings forth challenges such as information overload, privacy concerns, and the rapid spread of misinformation. Mass media PR professionals must navigate these complexities, employing strategies to ensure effective communication and reputation management. Social media analytics provide valuable insights into audience behavior and campaign effectiveness. Mass media organizations leverage data-driven decision-making to measure the impact of their PR efforts, understand audience sentiment, and refine communication strategies accordingly. Encouraging employee advocacy on social media becomes a powerful tool for mass media organizations. PR efforts guide employees in aligning their voices with the organizational narrative, enhancing brand image through authentic and diverse perspectives.



**Conclusion:**

The integration of social media into the practice of public relations within mass media organizations represents a paradigm shift. It empowers organizations to engage directly with their audience, shape narratives in real-time, and navigate the challenges of the digital landscape. As social media continues to evolve, it is imperative for mass media PR professionals to adapt strategically, embracing the opportunities presented while effectively managing the complexities of this dynamic communication environment.

**Recommendations**

For mass media organizations navigating social media in the practice of public relations, here are key recommendations:

**1. Develop a Comprehensive Social Media Strategy:**

Craft a well-defined social media strategy that aligns with overall PR objectives. Clearly outline goals, target audiences, key messages, and the platforms most relevant to your audience.

**2. Real-time Monitoring and Responsiveness:**

Establish a robust monitoring system to track conversations, trends, and mentions on social media. Swiftly respond to queries, address concerns, and engage in real-time conversations to build a responsive and dynamic online presence.

**3. Crisis Communication Planning:**

Develop and regularly update a crisis communication plan tailored for the digital age. Anticipate potential issues, establish response protocols, and use social media as a proactive tool to manage crises effectively.

**4. Consistent Brand Messaging:**

Maintain consistent messaging and branding across all social media platforms. This ensures a unified and recognizable brand image, fostering trust and reliability among your audience.

**5. Employee Advocacy Programs:**

Encourage employees to be advocates on social media, aligning their personal narratives with the organization's messaging. Develop guidelines and training programs to empower employees as brand ambassadors.

**6. Privacy Considerations:**

Prioritize privacy considerations when sharing information on social media. Clearly communicate how personal data is handled, respecting user privacy while maintaining transparency in your practices.

**7. Engage Authentically with the Audience:**

Foster authentic engagement by humanizing the organization. Share behind-the-scenes content, showcase employee stories, and actively participate in conversations to build genuine connections with the public.

**8. Stay Adaptable to Platform Changes:**

Social media platforms undergo frequent changes. Stay adaptable and update your strategies accordingly. Monitor algorithm changes, explore new features, and ensure your content aligns with the evolving dynamics of each platform.

**9. Educate and Train PR Teams:**

Continuous education is vital. Train your PR teams on the latest social media trends, best practices, and emerging technologies. Equip them with the skills to navigate challenges and seize opportunities effectively.

**10. Incorporate Visual and Interactive Content:**

Capitalize on the visual nature of social media by incorporating multimedia content. Utilize videos, infographics, and interactive elements to enhance engagement and convey messages more effectively.

By integrating these recommendations into their social media and PR strategies, mass media organizations can foster a robust online presence, engage authentically with their audience, and effectively navigate the complexities of the digital landscape.

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