digital
public relations

editors

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PALET
publications

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Public relations emerged with the efforts of people to live together and to influence each other and gradually became systematized over time. In particular, the efforts of organizations and managers to establish and maintain a relationship with the public based on two-way communication and mutual understanding have played an important role in the development of public relations. One of the most important factors that cannot be ignored in this development is communication technologies. Public relations has benefited from the communication tools and methods unique to each era and has rapidly adapted them to its own structure.

Today, especially new communication technologies and internet-based applications have brought different dimensions and perspectives to the field of public relations. With these technologies and applications, organizations have gained the opportunity to maintain their two-way relations with their target audiences more easily, quickly and interactively. In the literature, digital public relations also referred to as cyber public relations, online public relations, or e-public relations has become one of the most important areas of practice today. Through digital tools, various practices and campaigns in public relations, such as crisis management, reputation management, media relations, sponsorship, lobbying, corporate image, and corporate social responsibility, are being carried out. This development reveals the necessity of increasing scientific and academic studies on digital public relations.

This book contains 16 studies on digital public relations and its various application areas. These cover topics such as tools in digital public relations, artificial intelligence, internal communication, real-time interaction applications, corporate image, corporate social responsibility, lobbying, crisis communication, corporate advertising, reputation management, and sustainability. The chapter authors have evaluated the aforementioned topics within the context of digital communication.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the chapter authors and the publishing house executives who contributed to the preparation and publication of this book, and we wish you an enjoyable read.

October 2024, Konya

DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

Nilüfer CANÖZ[*]

Introduction

It is impossible for public relations, which help establish and maintain mutual communication, acceptance, cooperation, sympathy, and a positive image between an organization and its target audience, to remain unaffected by the social, economic, and technological developments occurring globally. As a matter of fact, new perspectives, new definitions, new application areas, new tools and methods have emerged in public relations as a result of each development. However, it can be said that the most important development that has affected public relations the most is the emergence of the internet.

The internet, which emerged in the 1960s, began to become widespread in the 1990s, and with its rapidly increasing impact and number of users, it has caused many changes around the world. The internet, which is used by more than 66% of the 8.08 billion people living in the world (Digital 2024 Quarterly Statshot Reports), is seen as the most important communication tool today. The internet is an important tool that affects societies, changes interpersonal relations, reshapes communication, creates the necessity to reconsider the management approaches of institutions and organizations, and causes the concept of digitalization to enter our lives.

Digitalization can be defined as the transformation of traditional structures (which could include societal structures, communication processes, relationships, business processes, etc.) through digital technologies (such as the internet, artificial intelligence, mobile devices, etc.), thereby creating the opportunity for much faster and more effective access to information, services, and products. With the digitalization that emerged as a result of technological developments, a new era has begun and its impact has manifested itself in almost every field. Education, health, finance, production, marketing, sales, advertising and public relations are some of these fields. Institutions and organizations serving in these fields have had to keep up with this digital transformation and have felt obliged to change or redesign

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their business models, strategies, management structures and communication styles. Thus, digital business models, digital business processes, digital management structures and digital public relations have emerged.

Digital public relations is the process of carrying out public relations activities through digital technologies. With the power provided by the internet or digitalization in general, digital public relations has become a field that provides a great advantage in the establishment, development and maintenance of communication, especially two-way communication, which is the basis of public relations. Thanks to digital public relations, institutions and organizations have found the opportunity to reach a much wider audience more quickly and at a lower cost than they could with traditional public relations. They have been able to increase their recognition and visibility globally, easily disseminate information, news, and developments about themselves, and also gained the ability to respond quickly in times of issues or crises.

Digital public relations has initiated a transformation in the traditional application areas of public relations and has led to the emergence of areas such as digital reputation management, digital crisis management, digital image management, digital event management, digital social responsibility, digital sponsorship and digital reputation management by using digital media such as websites, social media platforms, wikis, search engines, podcasts, corporate blogs, etc.

In this contex, it is aimed to explain the definition, objectives, tools and application areas of digital public relations that realize this important change and provide the above-mentioned advantages in this section.

Definition of Digital Public Relations

As traditional public relations began adapting to the digital transformation, various terms have emerged over time for the transformed public relations. These include expressions such as website/web-based public relations, online public relations, internet-related/focused public relations (Huang et al., 2017: 1366), e-public relations, cyber public relations, and digital public relations. Website/web-oriented public relations represents only one of the tools that constitute digital transformation and does not offer a broad perspective. Online public relations refers to public relations activities carried out with computers or other devices connected to the internet; internet-related/focused public relations refers to the use of internet technologies to communicate with target audiences; and e-public relations refers to public relations activities conducted over the internet.

When these definitions are examined, it is seen that they are very close to each other and focus on the internet and public relations activities. The nomenclature related to this new tool and environment has started to find itself after the 2000s and has been referred to as "Digital Public Relations". The term digital public relations has been accepted by many researchers because it is the term that best describes this era and this transformation and offers a much broader perspective (Permatasari et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2017; Verčič, et al., 2015; Zhou & Xu, 2021; Hallahan, 2004). However, it is also a reality that there are different definitions of what digital public relations is. Some of these different definitions are as follows;

Digital public relations is the newest concept of corporate reputation management. It is a creative, strategic, result-oriented and cost-effective public relations practice realized through computers and new communication technologies (Ezeah, 2005:135).

Digital public relations involves publishing online press releases, harnessing the power of journalistic networks and disseminating information via the internet to inform stakeholders about an organization's services or updates on those services (Gifford, 2010: 63).

Digital public relations is defined as the management of communication between an organization and the public through internet applications (websites, games and instant messaging services that process data and display information through files such as audio, graphics, images, videos, etc. mediated by the internet) (Huang et al., 2017: 1366).

Digital public relations is a public relations activity that uses online digital media to manage and also increase the reputation and understanding of an organization (Permatasari et al., 2021: 375).

Digital public relations is the use of computer channels (especially the internet) by public relations practitioners to fulfill their duties towards both the organization they work for and the public (stakeholders) (Aminat et al. 2022: 617-618).

Digital public relations is a form of interactive public relations that uses the internet to maintain public trust, understanding and perception of a company or organization, as well as to help build a brand (Tanjung and Asmaí, 2024: 12).

In line with these definitions; it can be said that digital public relations is the process of fulfilling the basic functions of public relations such as reaching the target audience, developing long-term relationships with them, interacting, receiving information, providing information, recognizing, promoting, attracting attention, managing image and reputation by using the advantages provided by technology and the activity of transforming the one-way communication offered by traditional media (TV, radio,

newspapers, magazines, etc.) into two-way communication offered by new media (social media, social networks, website, etc.) which has features such as multimedia, interactivity, and the elimination of time and space constraints.

Objectives of Digital Public Relations

The objectives of digital public relations can be considered as the achievement of general public relations goals in the digital realm. When examining the objectives of public relations, it is possible to see that they include mutual cooperation, mutual acceptance, understanding, persuasion, informing, communication, developing relationships, creating an image, building reputation, educating, representing, managing crises, attracting qualified personnel, drawing investors, enhancing customer loyalty, motivating employees, raising awareness, increasing brand value, boosting sales, raising market value, and similar goals. It is evident that public relations activities carried out through digital public relations also serve these same objectives. If we further elaborate on these objectives, we can list them as follows:

-Reaching a wide target audience and communicating directly with them,

-Ensuring that the basic principles of public relations such as openness, transparency and accuracy are realized in the digital environment,

-Strengthening corporate identity and supporting corporate image in digital environment,

-Establishing a fast, effective, efficient and measurable communication strategy and improving communication with digital tools,

-Organizing events in digital environments,

-Announcing and implementing social responsibility and sponsorship activities, raising awareness and increasing credibility in the digital environment,

-Managing a crisis by utilizing the interactive and rapid response capabilities of the digital environment,

-Managing reputation in the digital environment

-Saving time and money,

-Building customer loyalty and increasing sales through digital public relations activities.

Characteristics of Digital Public Relations

There are various features that distinguish digital public relations from other practices. According to Holtz, these are listed as being strategic, me-

asurable, integrated, and containing targeted features. The fact that it is designed to achieve the goals of institutions and organizations more easily and quickly and to affect business results and commercial outputs shows the feature of being strategic; the fact that many applications and platforms can be integrated with each other shows the feature of being integrated; the fact that it includes tools to evaluate strategic communication plans and activities shows the feature of being measurable, and the ability to take advantage of the internet and digital tools to reach niche (specific) target audiences shows the feature of moving towards the target (Koçyiğit, 2017: 49).

One of the characteristics of digital public relations is that it requires a variety of resources such as basic devices, communication channels, digital message tools, technologies and digital public relations experts. These resources can be explained as follows (Bulantseva, 2022):

1. **The main devices used in digital public relations** are televisions and radios, computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones, and other devices that can store and digitally distribute information.

2. **Digital public relations communication channels** include the capabilities of digital devices available for communication, transmission and exchange of information with target groups; online media are resources such as websites, social networks, influencers (bloggers and opinion leaders), video hosting (YouTube, Dailymotion, Vzaar, Video@Mail.Ru, etc.), search engines, review portals, messaging services and forums (specialized sites or areas of a site or portal organized for the exchange of views on a specific topic).

3. **Digital public relations messaging tools are** audience-oriented messages for the delivery of text, visual and audio information placed on company sites, social media, forums, blogs and video hosting services. Messages can provide news, generate discussion, include updates on future product releases, promotions or competitions, provide contests to attract new customers, or include stories, business cards, portfolios, surveys or entertaining digital images. In addition, the PR team can organize quizzes (for example, about the company's history), online events (conferences, presentations, webinars, live broadcasts or digital art shows).

4. **Digital public relations technologies** are a set of procedures and working methods adapted to Internet services and automated systems in order to optimize and efficiently manage communication with the target audience. These include technologies for monitoring and analyzing comments on the brand and the business (SemanticForce, Brand Analytics,

YouScan, etc.), technologies for deriving information (Google Analytics, Yandex.Metrica, etc.)about the analytics of the business website (number of visitors, visitor behavior, etc.), search technologies for target media and specific journalists writing on specific themes related to the business activity (World-newspapers.com, HARO (Help A Reporter Out)), technologies for managing the image and reputation of the business (SEO, ORM, SERM) and content creation technologies (Clideo, Picture Plus, Googledoc, etc.) in order to neutralize indifferent and negative reactions from target social groups and generate positive responses.

5. **Digital public relations professionals** need to be experts with new competencies to master the nuances of social communication using digital public relations. They should not only be familiar with the tools and technologies mentioned earlier, but also be experts in areas such as SMM (social media marketing), which provides assistance to customers, buyers and partners; SEM (search engine marketing), which helps users find a website that matches their queries; and web analytics, which analyzes the effectiveness of promotion methods and evaluates their results.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Public Relations

In addition to the advantages of digital public relations in activities such as creating a positive image, maintaining a positive relationship and managing reputation that institutions and organizations try to create with their target audiences, it also has some disadvantages. Advantages (Lucas, 2020: 364-366);

1. Improving SEO (search engine optimization) and search engine rankings through digital public relations: By publishing on quality websites and getting links to their own websites, it creates the opportunity to appear at the top of search engines with targeted keywords.

2. Increasing website traffic or business visibility through digital public relations: Opportunity for institutions and organizations to increase the number of people who read the content of messages about them and share the content on social media.

3. Building brand trust through digital public relations activities: Digital PR teams support brand trust by ensuring that customers see good things when they type the organization's name into a search engine, resolving complaints, creating engaging content, receiving positive and unbiased reviews, and communicating.

4. Generating potential customers through digital public relations: A good digital public relations strategy should present information about the business

and its products/services to the relevant target audience. In this way, the number of people reading the digital public relations messages and clicking on the website can be increased, creating the opportunity to generate more potential customers.

5. *Increasing sales through digital public relations activities:* A well-prepared digital PR campaign and successful websites with good content can convert potential customers into paying customers.

6. *Facilitating digital corporate communication activities:* Digital corporate communication activities consist of a company's communication efforts aimed at its internal and external target audiences using digital tools. In other words, it can be defined as the strategic management of digital technologies, digital infrastructures, and digitization processes to improve communication with internal and external target audiences and, more broadly, with society, in order to protect an organization's tangible and intangible corporate assets (Badham & Luoma-aho, 2023: 13). For this purpose, public relations and communication activities can be made fast, inexpensive, and customizable for individuals or groups through digital tools such as websites, email, the internet, SMS, WhatsApp, and video platforms, allowing for easy education and information efforts.

In addition to these advantages, there are other advantages such as creating and maintaining a positive image, establishing and maintaining a positive relationship by ensuring two-way communication, increasing interest, ensuring fast and direct communication, reducing communication and campaign costs, solving problems, reaching more target audiences, collecting data, easy and fast communication with the media.

Disadvantages of digital public relations;

1. *The possibility of public relations campaigns or strategies being copied or imitated:* Incidents such as a specific technique being easily copied by competitors, images or visuals being used to mislead audiences, and negative or false information being spread about products or services can occur.

2. *Competitive environment*: Digital public relations is experienced in a large process with many competitors.

3. *Security Issue*: Digital public relations has its own disadvantages that are not recognized in the value of the experience, such as the possibility of access to personal information and the risk of commercial information being taken.

4. *Lack of Trust*: One of the major disadvantages of digital public relations is that it can make the target audience of businesses uneasy, leading to a decrease in their credibility and damaging their image.

Beyond these disadvantages, other drawbacks include the potential to exacerbate the rapid spread and intensity of the crisis, the growing need for public relations professionals skilled in digital technology, and ethical and moral dilemmas.

Digital Public Relations Environments and Tools

There are many studies on the tools used in digital public relations activities (Safko & Brake, 2009; Phillips & Young, 2009; Triantafillidou & Yannas, 2014; Navarro et al., 2018; Sancar, 2016; Tanyıldız, 2021; Kılıç, 2016; Virmani & Gregory, 2021; Özgen & Tiryaki, 2024). Digital tools that started with the emergence of the internet and then disappeared with the development of technology, changed, developed, and entered our lives as new tools can be listed differently in each research. According to the common opinion emerging from the researches, these tools are Corporate Websites, Wikis, Blogs, Microblogs, Social Networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Linkedin, Youtube etc.), Forums, Social Bookmarks, Postcasts, Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality Technologies and Artificial Intelligence Tools.

In addition to these digital public relations tools, there are also some digital tools that public relations professionals use to make things easier. These can be categorized as follows (Pantaler, 2022);

1. Digital tools used to improve public relations: These digital tools offer many advantages, such as the ability to write press releases directly to people's emails, create a newsroom for the organization, create a schedule of social media posts to be published on various platforms, run all social networks directly in the application, answer questions and analyze their impact without going to the platform, and facilitate communication with the media. The most well-known tools are Prezzy, Buffer and Hootsuite.

2. Digital monitoring tools and reports: These digital tools are used to produce time-saving and easy-to-use reports to develop and calculate key metrics for public relations professionals. Some of the most well-known digital tools are Mediatoolkit and CoverageBook.

3. Digital tools for improving writing skills: One of the most important performances of such digital tools is to distinguish between long and complex sentences and frequent mistakes to improve the readability of the

text, to advise you to use shorter words when necessary and to warn you about words that weaken the spelling, to provide a "second opinion" on the text, to check spelling. The most famous digital tools are Hemingway Editor and Grammarly

4. Digital tools used for visual editing: These tools are divided into two categories. First, digital tools for editing graphic designs; second, video editing tools. Digital video editing tools such as Canva offer a wealth of design options that go beyond creating posts for social media and can be used to design e-books, brochures and online event invitations.

5. Digital search tools: Their most important feature is that they are simple but powerful tools that make it possible to search for popular topics online. They also point to blogs and articles specifically related to the topic, serve to be inspired by popular topics or, when one wants to find a popular point of view on a topic, allow journalists who write about it or companies similar to those where the current publication will be found, inspire SEOs, improve marketing content and even search for advertising. Some of the best known are Buzzsumo and Answer The Public.

These tools used in digital public relations are very important for institutions and organizations and have many benefits. Tong and Chan (2020: 69-73) categorize the benefits of these tools into three categories. These are:

1- Business intelligence: Understanding the interests and lifestyles of the public, analyzing and environmental scanning of diverse public opinion, gathering information on public attitudes and analyzing public complaints.

2- Corporate communication management: Ensuring effective implementation of corporate communication programs, effective management of corporate crises, effective management of employees and effective management of investor relations.

3- Profitability of Customers: There are benefits such as improving customers' reputation, achieving communication goals, increasing customers' sales and reducing communication costs.

Digital Public Relations Practices

Although almost every type of application of traditional public relations is also available for digital public relations, some applications are more prominent in digital public relations. These are; Digital Social Responsibility, Digital Sponsorship, Digital Crisis Management, Digital Reputation

Management, Social Media Management, Digital Image Management, Digital Media Relations, Digital Issue Management, Digital Event Management and Digital Corporate Advertising.

Digital Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is the ethical and responsible behavior of all kinds of institutions and organizations towards internal and external target audiences that are somehow affected by their activities, and the adoption of practices that consider and protect social and environmental impacts while conducting their activities (Sayımer, 2008: 229). However, as internet technology has advanced, CSR projects and activities have transformed into online and virtual corporate social responsibility, also known as digital social responsibility. The initiative or activity of an individual, group or organization to undertake and implement a corporate social responsibility idea online or through any digital platform is called digital social responsibility. In other words, digital social responsibility on social media can be defined as the point at which customers start using social media to engage organizations in social responsibility communication (Puriwat & Tripopsakul, 2022: 4).

Digital Sponsorship

Sponsorship is defined as the provision of materials, money or services by a commercial organization or government to an athlete/artist, organization, event or activity in order to achieve mutually agreed benefits for the sponsor and the recipient of sponsorship (Ball 1993: 19). It is a practice for advertising, public relations and marketing purposes. Sports, culture, arts, broadcasting, adventure and travel are some of the types of sponsorship. Sponsorship is an important public relations practice and is also indispensable for digital public relations.

Digital sponsorship can be done in the form of publishing the sponsorships made by institutions or organizations on digital media such as web pages and social networks in order to reach a wider target audience, or providing financial or service support in the design and presentation of digital tools to be used in the promotion of an event or a historical place.

Digital Crisis Management

Crisis management is defined as the strategies, processes, and countermeasures planned and implemented to deal with crises. Crises can cause institutions and organizations to lose their reputation, damage their image, and cause their target audience to lose trust. Therefore, institutions need

to prepare a strategic response and a unique intervention method to handle each crisis in a distinctive way, potentially reducing the escalation of the crisis (Mkamboi, et.al. 2022: 3).

In the digital age, the elimination of geographical and time barriers brought about by the internet, the emergence of peer media such as blogs and social networks, the immediate access to information by today's corporate audiences, and the increasing demand of these audiences to engage in two-way conversations with organizations highlight the need for institutions and organizations of all sizes and sectors to continuously reconsider how they approach crisis management (Alfonso & Suzanne, 2008: 152). This need for reassessment can be made more rational by focusing on digital crisis management activities.

Digital crisis management is the process of managing the crisis in accordance with pre-planned or pre-determined strategies through digital platforms and tools in combating crises that may arise suddenly, unexpectedly or in response to emerging crises. Activities such as activating existing crisis plans on the one hand, taking into account previously prepared scenarios on the one hand, carrying out crisis communication activities and establishing a crisis communication team, and then carrying out post-crisis improvements are the activities included in this process.

Digital Reputation Management

Corporate reputation is defined as the general perception created by an organization in society as a result of all its past actions, products and services, and the sum of abstract values that society attributes to the organization (Çerçi, 2022a: 68). There are various factors affecting corporate reputation. These are; emotional attraction, which is defined as the target audience having good feelings about the organization, appreciating, respecting and trusting the organization, the quality of the organization's products and services that increase the loyalty of customers to the organization, corporate social responsibility that reveals how the organization is perceived in the environment and how effective it is, corporate communication that constitutes the internal and external communication of the organization, and working environments that increase the loyalty of the employees of the organization (Bilbil & Güler, 2017: 381).

Digital reputation is a publicly held social evaluation of institutions and organizations based on their previous behavior, what has been published by the organization, and what third parties have posted about the organization online. Digital reputation management consists of monitoring digital

media, identifying relevant content, analyzing what people are saying about an entity, and engaging with customers if necessary (Shirzad, 2022: 223; Portmann et al., 2015).

Social Media Management

Social media, which emerged with the development of computer and internet technology, is a platform created for communication, information sharing, interaction, and content creation. It is widely used in the field of public relations. It offers opportunities such as creating and publishing content independently, reducing reliance on journalists, establishing interactive communication with the target audience, quickly and directly receiving feedback from the target audience, publishing press releases, facilitating internal and external communication, quickly scanning information, easily accessing institutional memory, shaping the agenda of the target audience according to the organization's preferences, and reducing costs. Additionally, it encourages participation, is open to everyone, allows for two-way communication, enables rapid community building, and features the ability to interlink through the links provided (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 259-260).

Digital Image Management

Corporate image is related to how the target audience of the organization perceives the organization and what kind of impression is formed about the organization in the mind. Corporate image consists of factors such as visual identity, communication activities (public relations, sponsorship, corporate advertising), social responsibility practices and quality. The corporate image that is tried to be created digitally is the image created by institutions and organizations on digital platforms with digital tools. In addition to the activities carried out in the digital environment based on the factors that make up the corporate image, it is tried to be created with the messages given by the organization, the interactions they create, the impressions they try to create, and the sharing of emotions and thoughts.

In order to manage the digital image, digital public relations tools (websites, forums, blogs, social networks, etc.) should be constantly monitored and controlled, complaints should be treated positively, measures should be taken to deal with problems that may arise, questions should be answered and strategies should be developed for all these.

Digital Media Relations

Media is extensively utilized in conducting promotional activities for institutions and organizations, conveying information to the public, creating a positive image, and raising awareness among the target audience. Media relations are efforts to establish relations with the communication media for the promotion of an organization in accordance with the interests and objectives of the organization (Kalender, 2008:31; Erdoğan, 2006:226). With the development of internet technologies, media relations have become easier for public relations experts. The opportunity to access sources without time and space constraints has reduced the circulation of news production from hours to minutes. Institutions and organizations create "online press rooms" or press web pages in certain sections of their websites. These sections contain information such as different events, information, news, calendars of events, multiple multi-media content, links related to the organization, and the use of various social media tools (RSS, podcast, news alert, etc.) (Güçdemir, 2021: 124-126).

Digital Issue Management

Issues management is defined as the capacity to mobilize, coordinate and manage public relations skills and all strategic and policy planning functions to ensure participation in the formulation of public policies that affect organizations (Özel & Sert, 2014:88). It is a function dedicated to helping organizations understand and strategically adapt to the public policy environment. It is dedicated to issue scanning, monitoring and follow-up. Its aim is to detect an emerging issue prompted by one or more stakeholder publics as early as possible. In this sense, new technologies facilitate the work of public relations professionals. They make significant contributions especially in issue scanning, monitoring and follow-up. In this way, issues can be captured earlier, an early position can be taken and this position can be improved. These activities are considered as digital public relations activities (Heath, 1998: 274).

Digital Event Management

Events are organizational activities in the form of group work in which interactive communication is provided with target audiences face-to-face or through new communication technologies to achieve common goals (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 49). While there is contact between institutions and organizations and the target audience in face-to-face activities, there is no physical contact in activities carried out through new communication technologies and called digital activities. In digital events, participants partici-

pate through digital media tools and communicate through these tools. Digital events are presented in the digital space and broadcast live. These events have the advantages of including live interactions such as surveys, chats, question-and-answer sessions or games, being able to watch the recording later, reaching a wider target audience, and saving time and money.

There are also activities that combine face-to-face and digital activities and are referred to as hybrid activities. These activities are a combination of both physical and digital activities. Participants can physically participate in these events, or they can choose to participate digitally if they wish. The physical event is recorded live and broadcast through digital tools. While physical participants perform various activities within the event, digital participants can participate with messages or digital signs (emoji, random expressions, etc.).

Seminars, workshops, round tables, webinars, video conferences, interactive question-answer sessions, interactive voting or surveys, interactive knowledge checks, interactive feedback forms, digital whiteboards, various virtual activities are examples of digital activities. In addition, Hackathons (Karakavuz, 2022: 93) have recently entered our lives as digital events.

Event management and digital event management is a field of practice that includes all the planning, organization and measurement processes of events with different objectives- promotion, awareness raising, celebration, etc. in line with the objectives of the person, institution or organization (Kurt, S. 2018:69) This practice is planned and implemented in order to communicate the mission, values and goals of the institution to a wider audience, to strengthen communication between employees and to increase the interaction of the institution with the outside world (Karakuş, 2023: 73).

Digital Corporate Advertising

Corporate advertisements are advertisements that focus on the business itself, not on the products or services produced by the business. It serves to foster good feelings towards the business rather than a specific product, to increase sales and to improve the business's relations with the various groups with which it is associated. Rather than aiming to directly influence people's buying behavior of the company's products, it attaches importance to shaping their attitudes towards a very specific issue and defending the policy pursued by the business. In other words, less attention is paid to the products produced by the business and more attention is

paid to the organization as a whole. It contributes to the image of the business and is made by paying a fee to the media as in advertising (Canöz, 2016: 17).

Thanks to the opportunities provided by digital tools (websites, social media), in the corporate advertisements, the unique philosophy that shapes an organization's personality is communicated to target audiences in an accurate and trustworthy manner, along with the visual elements of the corporate identity (such as logos, emblems, slogans, and corporate colors). Thus, it is aimed to ensure recognition in the brains of target audiences and to rise to the top of the order of preference in purchasing (Çerçi, 2022b: 99-100). Websites, which are especially accepted as corporate advertising tools and media, are becoming a different advertising area that provides the transfer of information with much wider content than traditional advertising media, through multimedia (animation, graphics, sound, image, video, etc.) and enables interactive communication between the organization and target audiences (Elden & Yeygel, 2006: 291, 337).

Conclusion

Digital public relations is a new concept that emerged with the use of the innovations brought by the digital world for public relations purposes, such as the *Internet,* which has features such as eliminating time and space limits, providing easy and fast access to information, gathering mass communication tools on a single device, creating new communication environments; *social media and networks* with features such as interaction, receiving quick responses, producing content, organizing events, disseminating information, commenting, sharing pictures, photos and videos, creating communities, etc., *websites and other digital tools* with features such as being the visible face of the institution and organization, creating an image, realizing sales, advertising, showing its activities, explaining its financial power, etc. It is a new concept that emerged with the use of innovations brought by the digital world such as websites and other digital tools for public relations purposes. The main purpose of digital public relations is to develop an environment of cooperation, acceptance and effective communication between the organization and its target audience.

While digital public relations can be an advantage for institutions and organizations in building image and reputation, it can also be a disadvantage. In particular, digital tools can be much more effective than traditional tools in the emergence and spread of crises and can lead to damage to corporate reputation. However, digital public relations tools facilitate the

work of public relations professionals and help public relations practices reach much wider target audiences.

As a result, in this digital age we live in, in order to survive, to differentiate from competitors, to be successful, it is necessary to follow the technology, to keep up to date and adapt, and to fulfill the digitalization function of public relations as in every field.

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TOOLS OF DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

Kadir CANÖZ[*]

Introduction

Although the concept of "digital public relations" first emerged with the invention of the internet and the establishment of organizational websites, its real development and diversification occurred after the advent of Web 2.0 technology. 2.0 technology has eliminated the unidirectionality of the internet and revealed its interactivity feature, leading to the emergence of internet-based applications and the inclusion of new channels called social media in human life. Likewise, today's people see social media as the most reliable mass media and the most reliable source of information (Çerçi, Canöz & Canöz, 2023: 343) The use of these innovations in public relations has given rise to the term "Digital Public Relations." Digital Public Relations involves conducting traditional public relations activities using internet-based digital tools and disseminating these activities through digital platforms.

Digital Public Relations (DPR) is defined as the use of digital and social media technologies to manage an organization's awareness, understanding, reputation, and brand through purposeful exposure via digital media (www.marketing-teacher.com). It includes publishing online newsletters to inform target audiences and leveraging internet news networks to spread updates about an organization's services or those services themselves to stakeholders (Gifford, 2010: 63). DPR offers several advantages over traditional public relations practices, including (Bremner, 2024):

- Time savings compared to traditional public relations practices,
- Providing scalability to public relations efforts,
- Providing the most accurate and up-to-date information in the market with the greatest and most reliable certainty,
- Enabling teams and brands scattered across the globe to collaborate.

The objectives of Digital Public Relations fundamentally overlap with those of traditional public relations. The main difference lies in the use of

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internet applications such as blogs, websites, and social networking services. These tools offer practitioners communication opportunities, such as delivering information to relevant target audiences, engaging in direct and reciprocal interaction, and maintaining desired positive relationships. Different academics may identify different tools for Digital Public Relations. For example, according to Christine Hayes (2023), who wrote an article about the tools of digital public relations, the tools of digital public relations are fast and generally online platforms that can help distribute content, monitor what is being shared about the organization, and build a target audience for the produced content. These tools can also be used to respond to inquiries from potential customers, reach out to journalists and influencers, and even measure the success of the content. Some examples include webinars, blogging, podcasts, social media, web profiles, videos, and user-generated content. According to Mayfield (2008: 6), Yeniçıktı (2017: 128-153), Tanyıldız (2021: 55-77) & Canöz (2020:261), the tools include social networks, blogs, microblogs, wikis, podcasts, forums, content-sharing sites, location-based services, RSS (Really Simple Syndication), and social bookmarking and tagging.

1-Webinars

Digital public relations tools resemble traditional communication tools in that they are used to distribute information about the business to the media or online publications. However, they differ in that they offer opportunities for interactive engagement with the media and media professionals (Hayes, 2023). Therefore, the first step in starting a digital public relations campaign is preparing press releases and selecting the appropriate tools for their distribution. One of the key tools used for this purpose is Webinars.

Webinars provide several benefits to organizations due to their ability to reach a wide audience and acquire new information that could lead to sales for the business. They also offer opportunities to inform, educate, and communicate with key stakeholders and components across various sectors including commerce, education, health, and others. In addition to these benefits, webinars also offer (https://explore.zoom.us/tr/):

Awareness Building: Webinars help create awareness by presenting important information to large audiences. For instance, large organizations frequently use webinars to conduct general meetings to communicate important information to employees located in different locations. Govern-

ment and educational institutions use webinars to disseminate crucial information to the public.

Increasing Potential Customers and Sales: Webinars are an effective method for obtaining information that can lead to sales and acquiring new customers. For example, requiring attendees to provide their email addresses to register for a webinar enables the organization to build a large email list, which can be used for future sales and marketing campaigns.

Promoting New Products and Services: Webinars are an effective way to demonstrate the reliability, features, and benefits of newly launched products or services. They also help in acquiring sales-related information, attracting new customers, and speeding up sales processes.

Training and Information Sharing: Webinars enable sharing of valuable information with the target audience and obtaining immediate feedback. They are also highly useful for training purposes. Additionally, the "Q&A" sessions within webinars offer viewers the opportunity to ask questions about the topic and address concerns or issues they may have. The ability to record these webinars on digital platforms allows the recorded content to be used for training and educational purposes in other events. It is also used in the formation of the corporate culture consisting of all the points that the organization values and in the transfer of this culture to the members of the organization (Damgacı, 2023: 8832).

Virtual Events: Webinars support single-session virtual events where a group of presenters or panelists address an audience interested in acquiring information and engaging in communication via online chat and Q&A. Multi-session virtual events may consist of several webinar sessions.

Webinars can include a variety of interactive elements in addition to the content, such as:

Surveys and Polls: Allowing for immediate feedback and the ability to ask questions to the target audience in real time.

Advertising Banners: Offering the ability to display your offer during the meeting to encourage participants to purchase products or services.

Chat: Enabling real-time conversations with the audience through integrated chat functions.

Call-to-Action Buttons: Encouraging participants to take action and click on links, thereby contributing to higher conversion rates.

2-Social Networks

One of the tools used by digital public relations is social networks. Social networks are virtual environments where individuals create personal spaces, connect with other users in the system, share various types of materials (videos, photos, news, etc.) digitally, and engage in interaction (Özmen, 2009: 146). These networks are structured around interpersonal connections such as friendships, shared interests, or ideas. They are typically used for sharing email-style messages, instant messages (IM), and chat content. They allow file sharing, blog creation, and integration of content from other platforms (Tanyıldız, 2021: 65). Due to these features, social networks enable individuals from all cultures and backgrounds to communicate with their friends. They also provide opportunities for enhancing social skills, expressing oneself freely, adapting to the digital world, and easily conducting research and analysis. Examples of these networks include Myspace, Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Bebo.

Public relations efforts can use social networks to disseminate information about competitions, innovations, announcements, sponsorships, social responsibilities, events, industry news, etc., to their target audiences. They can also learn about the preferences, likes, and criticisms of their target audiences through these networks. For instance, organizations can use X's (Twitter's) hashtag (#) feature to set their agenda and announce it to users (e.g., "#publicrelations"); users can then interact through the hashtag, and if a certain number of users share content or exchange messages using the hashtag, it can become a "TrendTopic" (tt), gaining prominence.

3-Blogs (Web Logs)

The term "blog" is derived from "weblog," which emerged in the early 1990s as a platform for free thought on the internet. Blogs come after the e-mail groups that were created in terms of opening up personal ideas to the world (Karaçor, 2009: 90). Also known as weblogs, blogs are online platforms that allow individuals, groups, and businesses to write and periodically share content on various topics without requiring technical expertise (Özüdoğru, 2014: 38). They serve as a form of the online journal where information, comments, and opinions are shared from current to old for broad target audiences. In this regard, blogs function as both online diaries and online magazines due to their chronological organization of past in-

formation. Readers can comment on posts, enabling reciprocal communication between the publisher and the target audience.

Blogs are used by individuals to share expertise and experiences related to their interests, while organizations use them for public relations purposes to facilitate communication, conduct research, identify target audiences, build emotional connections, manage internal communication, establish long-term customer relationships, create a positive image, conduct market research, gain competitive advantage, strengthen their brand, attract new business opportunities, contribute to crisis management, improve goodwill, and increase visibility (Seyfi, 2017: 39). Features such as adding text and images to content and tracking visitor statistics are available to users. Many blog sites are interconnected, allowing bloggers to list related blogs on their sites.

Types of blogs include personal blogs, thematic blogs, sponsored blogs, corporate blogs (Alıkılıç & Onat, 2007: 906), community blogs, project blogs, and fake blogs (Yeniçıktı, 2017: 137).

Organizations seeking to communicate with stakeholders in digital public relations use blogs to announce news about their products and services, convey information on specific topics, and create agendas. Target audiences can also comment on these publications, add contributions, and provide feedback, both positive and negative, which can be directed back to the organization.

4-Microblogs

Another tool used in digital public relations is microblogging. Microblogs are usually uploaded in the form of SMS text messages. They represent an activity between instant messaging and blogging, involving sending brief, concise messages online and via mobile networks. Microblog users typically compose shorter sentences and share more frequently compared to blog users. They support features such as sending messages, audio, images, multimedia, and even attachments, as well as enabling users to form new friendships, give and receive recommendations, access real-time updates, promote products and services, conduct research, make purchases, update customers, and send news, events, and notes (www.kampustenevar.com). Due to their ease of use, portability, and rapid accessibility, microblogs have gained popularity quickly.

For public relations, microblogs are used to promote, announce, and disseminate short news, informative messages, announcements, and events. They are also valuable for gathering feedback by conveying target

audience requests, criticisms, and comments to management (Brown, 2009: 36-37).

Some well-known microblogging platforms include X (Twitter), Four-square, Friendfeed, Tumblr, MySpace, LinkedIn, Google+ (Google Plus), Plurk, Cif2.net, Jaiku, Specipik, and identi.ca. Additionally, platforms like Pinterest, Vine, and MeetMe also offer microblogging features. Facebook, MySpace, and LinkedIn have microblogging capabilities through status updates. X (Twitter) is the most popular microblogging tool.

Microblogs share several common features (Bostancı, 2015: 62):

- **Short Entries in Reverse Chronological Order:** Similar to blogs, the most recent post appears at the top.
- **Content Portability:** Published content can be viewed on other devices and media other than the page on which it was published, and can be shared on other social media tools.
- **Personal Expression:** Microblog accounts are usually managed by a single individual, and posts reflect the user's expressions.
- **Interaction with Other Users:** Microblog users can access other users' posts, establish friendships, and follow others.
- **Control Over Message Distribution:** Users can personalize their messages and send them to individuals, groups, or the public.

5-Wikis

The term "wiki" is derived from the Hawaiian word "wikiwiki," meaning "quick." A wiki is a type of website where every visitor can edit and organize pages as they wish (Köse, 2008: 90). Unlike other web-based content management systems, wikis allow online content creation independently of a dedicated editor. They function like a decentralized encyclopedia, enabling information exchange without a central source of control. The most well-known example of a wiki is Wikipedia.

A wiki, used in digital public relations, is a browser-based web space that allows knowledgeable individuals to contribute to a field of expertise and provide sources for articles on specific topics. Wikis are inherently collaborative and are characterized by community participation in content creation. Unlike blogs, where readers can only comment on existing posts, wikis allow anyone to be an author and modify existing content using an "edit" option (Güzel, 2020: 105).

Groups use wikis to:
- create extensive documentation easily,

- collaborate on collective plans and goals,
- facilitate action or speed up information flow,
- track emails, schedules, and other work applications.

Wikis enable informal, non-official communication, serving as alternative publishing platforms for those who have unique or critical perspectives that may not be shared in formal settings. This feature allows employees to discuss topics they might not be able to address directly with their managers. Due to these characteristics, wikis are often used for sharing and obtaining information, involving a broader knowledge base and offering significant academic value compared to other methods.

Wikis are structurally similar to blog pages but are typically multi-authored rather than single-authored (Tanyıldız, 2021: 58). While blog visitors can only comment on previously written posts, wiki pages are open for editing by any user. Wikis hosts a wide range of content, including definitions, storybooks, articles, news sources, and multimedia resources like photos, audio, and video (Aytekin, 2011: 9). They can be used in various fields, from cake design to intelligence gathering (Tanyıldız, 2021: 56).

Organizations use wikis in digital public relations to:
- facilitate PR tasks by allowing users to promote the organization,
- announce updates within the organization,
- enhance internal communication (Çetintaş, 2014: 102-103),
- engage with target audiences informally, discuss specific topics (Koçyiğit, 2017: 104),
- gather feedback and build knowledge repositories,
- share updates and manage projects collaboratively (Yeniçıktı, 2017: 133).

Popular wikis include:
- Wikipedia (virtual encyclopedia)
- Wikitravel (travel guide)
- WikiWikiWeb
- eXe Project (example of using a wiki to operate a website)
- Auckland.Wiki (city guide for Auckland, New Zealand)
- AKOWiki (an encyclopedia for technology and staff training)
- Scholarpedia (peer-reviewed wiki project) (https://wikieducator.org)

6-Podcasts

Podcasts are broadcasts of audio, photo, video, and text content that can be accessed after publication using devices like computers, smartphones, MP3 players, video players, or laptops. A common example of a podcast is Apple iTunes, which plays music and films on Apple products (Güzel, 2020: 100).

In other words, podcasts are a series of video or radio programs available over the Internet and downloaded to portable devices like computers, phones, and tablets via RSS feeds. They operate on a subscription model and have regular audiences and communities.

Podcasts can be used for both entertainment and educational purposes. For example, employees can follow training sessions through podcasts, and various data can be tracked via podcasts.

Podcasts connect individuals or organizations, allowing content uploaded from anywhere in the world to be accessed, and thus make it possible to reach broad target audiences. They also provide the ability to receive feedback, build communities, research the past, and locate recorded content (Mayfield, 2008: 20). When a new podcast is uploaded, subscription services automatically notify all subscribers and the content is downloaded to Internet-connected devices.

In digital public relations, podcasts are used to deliver PR content, such as promotional videos and audio recordings, to target audiences. They facilitate obtaining feedback about the organization or events, archiving content online, re-watching content at any time, updating audiences with the latest changes, and overcoming the limitations of traditional media such as immediacy. Podcasts extend reach beyond conventional boundaries, making content accessible almost anywhere with Internet connectivity.

7-Forums

Forums are digital tools used by public relations for information exchange and dissemination. Forums are online discussion groups where individuals can express their views on specific topics or interests within certain rules. They are also referred to as message boards or online discussion platforms (Mayfield, 2008: 23; Güzel, 2020: 100).

In forums, members typically log in to follow discussions. They participate in conversations and send messages under various topics or tags based on their interests (Alikılıç, 2011: 41). Forums enable users to communicate about specific topics, obtain information, and exchange recommendations and advice.

Forums can cover a wide range of subjects, from brand or product opinions to current fashion trends. Their ability to gather individuals with similar interests around specific topics makes them an attractive tool for organizations seeking to reach their target audience. Forums are significant in public relations for distributing announcements, innovations, achievements, social responsibilities, sponsorships, and event information. They also allow organizations to gauge public opinion on various matters through feedback from forum members.

8-Content Sharing Sites

Content Sharing Sites are one of the tools used in digital public relations to create an image, inform, entertain, and announce. These platforms are communities that organize and share content in the form of text, video, or photos on the Internet. The most well-known examples include Flickr and Instagram for photos, YouTube for videos, Delicious for bookmarks (Mayfield, 2008: 6), and Slideshare for PowerPoint presentations (Yeniçıktı, 2017: 142).

The purpose of content sharing sites is to facilitate the sharing of media content among users. Sites like Delicious allow content to be made openly accessible or restrict access to specific individuals; Flickr and Instagram focus on sending photo content to friends; YouTube allows for sharing videos either with friends or publicly; Slideshare provides the ability to publish PowerPoint text content and visual animations. These platforms also permit content to be viewed, shared, and discussed by others. Thus, the functions of providing and receiving information in public relations are fulfilled.

Organizations utilize content-sharing sites to communicate with their target audiences, build a positive image, inform them about updates and events, and promote, and enhance positive emotions.

9-Location-Based Services

Location-based services are information and entertainment services created by aggregating the geographic location information of a device accessible via mobile devices. Location information is obtained from:

- the geographic location information of the device's base station,
- GPS hardware on the device,
- databases of registered IPs (Dağdelen, 2013: 1).

These are social networking services that allow individuals to share their current location and mark physical places. Examples include Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook, Foursquare/Swarm, and GetGlue. Users employ

these networks when they wish to indicate their location or the services they are receiving; in other words, when they want to be visible. While individuals use these platforms to showcase themselves to their social circle, create an image, and gain a reputation, businesses use them as a tool to increase visibility, enhance their image, and create awareness.

Organizations use location-based services in public relations to introduce themselves to their target audience, communicate their physical locations, build an image, gain visibility, and learn about likes and critiques regarding themselves. Additionally, location-based services are used to deliver customized and timely information to the target audience when they physically approach the organization or service.

10-Really Simple Syndication (RSS)

RSS is a web page notifier commonly used by news providers, blogs, and podcasts to facilitate the easy tracking of new content added to desired websites. Publishers who want users to follow frequently updated website content provide a feed (web page notifier) that users can subscribe to, allowing them to track multiple websites from a single point. The file formats used are ".rss" and ".xml" (www.aramamotoru.com).

Internet users can subscribe to regularly updated sites using RSS technology and follow the content via various RSS clients. The site administrator or owner makes technical adjustments to provide this service and sends the XML in the appropriate format when requested by an RSS client.

Content provided through RSS can include the full content, summary, or just the headline of the content on the website (https://tr. wikipedia.org). RSS operates similarly to subscription systems for newspapers and magazines, delivering new issues to homes. It can even be considered a virtual application of the traditional media subscription system. When up-to-date content in standard formats, such as blog posts and news headlines, is published, it is continuously delivered to the "RSS reader" of subscribers (http://www.emo.org.tr/ekler). The reader can click on the headline to view the full content on the original site. In digital public relations, RSS can be used to quickly deliver new information about the organization or its services to relevant stakeholders. This way, stakeholders do not need to spend time and effort tracking publications related to the organization; news and information are delivered to them directly.

11-Social Bookmarking and Tagging

Brands and organizations use social bookmarking and tagging tools to manage communication, persuade consumers before purchase, and enhance satisfaction after sales.

Social Bookmarking involves offering users the ability to share content related to products and services provided by brands and organizations via keywords or website links on social media. The main benefit of social bookmarking is to increase popularity in search engines, drive site traffic (Koçak, Atalık, & Koçak, 2024: 6), and present links to pages with similar content to users. Popular online bookmarking services today include Del.icio.us, StumbleUpon, and Diigo.

Traditionally, internet users add websites they like or are interested into their "favorites" for convenience. The next time they go online, they can easily find and access these bookmarked pages. Social bookmarking advances this traditional bookmarking by facilitating easier re-access to valuable information, presenting topics, and enabling people with similar interests to share interesting and relevant content easily. Sharing quality content or organizations on social networks contributes to increased visibility, faster indexing/listing, and a rise in visitor numbers. It also enhances the organization's visibility and allows for direct feedback. Users can make their bookmarks publicly available and accessible from any computer, contributing to increased visibility in public relations and aiding in the promotion of products or services, raising awareness and brand recognition, and prompting actions related to the company or product (Gunelius 2011: 22).

Tagging refers to the process or activities where an individual attaches a label to an item and classifies it. Social tagging, specifically, involves linking a person, page, or location in shares such as photos or status updates (Alan, Kabadayı, & Erişke, 2018, 498). Through social tagging, brands or consumers can use markers like "@" and "#" to tag and reach wider audiences through photos, videos, comments, and similar posts (Koçak, Atalık, & Koçak, 2024: 6).

Tags are typically designations assigned to a bookmark as indexers. For instance, a post about the television series "House" might be tagged with terms such as "drama," "FOX," "television," "TV," "medicine," "health," or other relevant tags. These designations facilitate easy retrieval of bookmarked content from memory. People can also add descriptions and comments to bookmarks.

Tagging ensures that online content is not lost and makes it easier to locate the pages containing the content later. In the field of public relati-

ons, social tagging, and labeling allow for the examination of how users categorize business content, understand how the website and organization are perceived by viewers, assist in marketing goals, drive traffic to the organization's webpage, provide desired written content, creating links from highly important sites, and influencing the improvement of search engine rankings based on click-through rates (www.sosyalmedyahaber.com).

Conclusion

The invention of digital tools and platforms such as computers, the internet, and artificial intelligence and introduction of these tools to humanity have led to significant changes in the field of public relations, just as in everyday life. For example, the excessive need for newspapers and journalists has diminished, and every institution and organization has begun to fulfill the roles of publisher and journalist themselves.

In addition, while the lack of time required in delivering news to newspapers and televisions has been eliminated to a great extent, technological capabilities have facilitated the delivery of news; have reduced the necessity of using traditional mass media such as newspapers, magazines and television in terms of public relations and have made it possible to reach target audiences cheaply, safely, directly, quickly and according to preference. New technology-based digital platforms and tools have eliminated the reciprocity (simultaneity) in communication with target audiences, making it possible to reach an individual, specific group or groups, or the entire audience as needed. Both the promotion and recognition dimensions of public relations have become faster, easier, and more cost-effective. The requirement of 'being able to use digital technologies' has been added to the qualities that public relations professionals must possess. Additionally, public relations professionals are now required to use digital programs necessary for editing and assembling, as well as programs for writing news, obtaining research data, and publishing the results. While such developments have made the work done in public relations units based on human knowledge and capacity to be done with digital tools and programs, the number of employees employed in these units has also decreased and become more technological.

In conclusion, it can be said that the digitalization experienced in almost every field is also inevitable in public relations, significant changes and transformations have been experienced in public relations and today's modern public relations can only achieve the desired results by using these digital tools and environments.

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS
A DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOL

İhsan ÇAKIR ٭

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the digital revolution has led to profound changes in many fields with the rapid development of internet technology. The public relations sector, which is one of the fields affected by these changes, has experienced a transition from traditional methods to digital methods. This transition process has necessitated the reassessment of communication strategies used in public relations activities and the effective use of the opportunities offered by the digital environment. Digital transformation has brought along the need for the public relations sector to adapt to the changing habits of target audiences toward digital platforms. Changes in the behavior and preferences of the target audience due to the impact of digitalization have made it even more important to carry out public relations activities on digital platforms. As Özgen (2019, p.21) stated, to successfully manage these changes, public relations professionals need to analyze the target audience in detail. This situation has made it necessary to harmonize communication strategies and applications with the digital world. In today's communication environment, advanced digital skills and strategies are becoming increasingly important for public relations activities to be successful. In this context, it is predicted that applications developed with artificial intelligence algorithms can be of great help to public relations professionals.

The use of artificial intelligence carries both big opportunities and various risks in the sectors it transformed. As persons like Stephen Hawking and Elon Musk have stated, the direction of development of artificial intelligence and its potential effects has uncertainties and these uncertainties come with some risks (Önder, 2020, p.3). For this reason, the future of artificial intelligence technology is often discussed with fear scenarios and

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uncertainty. However, despite these concerns, artificial intelligence applications continue to be used more in different fields.

This study shows that artificial intelligence applications, which have been increasingly used recently, in digital public relations; ıt aims to create a roadmap and raise awareness about the extent of its impact. For this purpose, in the study, it was tried to reach the answers to the questions "can artificial intelligence affect digital public relations applications?", "are there artificial intelligence tools that will perform tasks on behalf of public relations experts and alleviate the workload?", "does artificial intelligence have the quality to direct and change the public relations profession?".

1. Artificial Intelligence as a Concept

To begin with, it is important to consider the meanings of the terms "artificial" and "intelligence" to understand the concept of artificial intelligence. According to the Turkish Language Association, the term artificial is defined as "made or produced with the help of human beings by resembling the examples existing in nature, man-made", while the term intelligence is expressed as "all of the human abilities of thinking, reasoning, perceiving objective facts, judging, and drawing conclusions" (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2023).

The concept of artificial intelligence forms a combination of these 2 terms. Nevertheless, as the term artificial intelligence is too complicated, it becomes harder to come up with a joint definition (Berryhill et al., 2019, p.11). According to Acar (2007), the word artificial does not state a living organism but a process that is carried out by computers, while the term intelligence includes information, thinking, and reasoning. Accordingly, it is possible to define artificial intelligence as "thinking machines created by humans' own hands". However, since the concept of intelligence has a complex structure and there are different perspectives at the point of meaning, a common consensus could not be established and everyone tried to define it according to their interests. John McCarthy, considered the father of artificial intelligence, defined artificial intelligence as "the science and engineering of making intelligent machines" (Berryhill et al., 2019, p.11). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), on the other hand, defines artificial intelligence as "a machine based system that performs human like functions and can make predictions, recommendations and decisions that affect real and virtual environments" (2019b, p.6). In addition to these;

- Raynor (1999, p.13), "developing techniques that make computers behave like humans",
- Doğan (2002, p.60), "imitating human brain's behaviors with a device and learning information about brain functions",
- Taşkın and Adalı (2004, p.138), "computers that equipped with behaviors like learning information, sensing, seeing and thinking which are unique to human intelligence",
- Civelek and Calayır (2007, p.4161), "the ability of a computer based machine to perform reasoning, decision making, generalization which are unique to humans",
- Öztuna (2017, p.76), "the branch of science that makes it possible to machines have skills like judgment, planning, learning, communicating, and moving objects",
- Özdoğan (2018, p.90), "ability of machines to perform tasks that humans do",
- Bostrom (2018, p.40), "systems that receive what the sensory organs transmit to the brain and the outputs of internal processes and transform them into a presentation using a logical and intuitive reasoning system",
- Banger (2018, p.37), "a machine mimicking human's cognitive skills like learning and problem solving functions.",
- Frank et al., (2019, p.66) defined it as "a field that focuses on learning machines".

There are also efforts to categorize the definitions of the concept of artificial intelligence. Russell and Norvig (2012, p.2) grouped the definitions into four categories: "thinking/acting like a human" and "thinking/acting rationally". Öztürk and Şahin (2018, p.26) categorized them as "thinking like a human/thinking intelligently" and "acting like a human/acting intelligently". As a result of these classifications, the definitions of artificial intelligence have been unified on a common ground. In both classifications, the phrases "thinking like a human" and "acting like a human" are emphasized.

There are two different perspectives on the system of definitions. The first point of view is "based on study principles used for analyzing a theory or a model with technological tools". In the indicated perspective, recognizing humans is acknowledged as a method. The second point of view which is based on pragmatism is "equipping computers with a human like ability and building it with a system like human intelligence" (Haton & Haton, 1991, p.7). While the first point of view emphasizes the inspection

dimension of machines, the second point of view emphasizes equipping machines with the functions of human intelligence.

Artificial intelligence, which is based on human beings and referred to as artificial human beings, offers the opportunity to use science and technology by equipping them with humanoid features. In other words, with artificial intelligence, artificial humans are created. Because what is referred to as artificial intelligence is essentially based on the presentation of the special codes found in individuals' neurons through a technological device. On the other hand, although studies about the methodology of brain functioning are already being carried out, no system has been exactly determined yet. Some scientists remark that the working principle of artificial intelligence is parallel to a computer, and some claim that it works with a programmed text system (Aydın & Değirmenci, 2018, p.80).

Behind the diversification of artificial intelligence tools and the expression of the concept with very different definitions lies the fact that this concept is embodied in many fields from engineering to psychology, sociology to medical sciences (Doğan, 2002, p.54). Factors such as its applicability in many different sectors, the diversification of tools, and the increase in the number of people who can access these tools have created a number of opportunities and threats.

Table 1. Strengths and Weaknesses in Opportunities and Threats of Artificial Intelligence

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
- Data richness -Diversity of artificial intelligence technologies -Sectoral richness -Diversity of the application area -Transformative impact on the economy	-Accessibility of data -Social and labor force changing impact -Lack of public policies and regulations -Lack of national and international artificial intelligence centers	-Instrument of public policy -Governance tool -Tool for economic development -Data processing tool	-Unemployment, social dissatisfaction -Ethical and regulatory uncertainty -International cyber threats -Data security

Source: Saygılı (2020), pages 25-29 and Uzun (2020), adapted from pages 36-38.

As seen in table 1, the strengths of artificial intelligence constitute opportunities and weaknesses constitute threats. Another point to be considered is that elements such as data richness, which artificial intelligence offers as an opportunity, can also be used as a threat. Today, there is a thought that threats will not pose a problem due to the limited level of human interaction with artificial intelligence and the opportunities it provides. However, it is predicted that the rapid diversification of artificial intelligence tools will constitute the biggest problem of the next century.

As a result, artificial intelligence tools have the structure of gradually transforming every sector in which they are used with their opportunities and strengths. The field of public relations is also one of the areas that uses artificial intelligence applications and is therefore experiencing change. These developments have also opened the doors of a new era in the field of public relations.

2. The Place of Artificial Intelligence in Digital Public Relations Applications

Digital public relations, which is a practice that aims to communicate with the target audience using digital media (Laksamana, 2015; Kharisma & Kurniawan, 2018: p.14), includes activities that involve the dissemination of content related to the organization, such as online newsletters, over the internet network (Gifford, 2010, p.64). In this context, with the development and spread of internet networks, digital public relations, which is defined as the implementation of traditional public relations applications in a digital environment and the use of digital tools, adopts internet-based applications such as websites and social media platforms to communicate with stakeholders (Guillory & Sundar, 2014; Taylor & Kent, 2010; Huang et al. 2017).

At this point, tools regulated by artificial intelligence algorithms are coming to the fore as new and effective tools used in digital public relations activities. Before detailing the place of artificial intelligence in digital public relations applications, it is necessary to know what the artificial intelligence tools are used in public relations. Capterra, the world's leading software review platform, has listed the artificial intelligence software used by public relations professionals as follows (Capterra, 2023);

Table 2. Public Relations Software

PRgloo	Publict.io	Pr.co	TVEyes
Brand24	ISEBOX	BuzzSumo	Agility PR
CoverageBook	BuzzStream	Covered Press	Meltwater
Prezly	Business Wire Suite	Propelmypr	Prowly
Publifix	Muck Rack	SignalAI	Cision
Wiztopic	Zignal Enterprise	BABBLER	Outbrain
Releasd	NinjaOutreach	MediaHQ	PingGo
PR Underground	ReleaseLive	PressPage	PR Fire
Sourcery	PressCable	MyConvento	PressFile
Teamogy	LianaMonitor	NetBase Quid	Article Forge
24-7 Press Release	Roxhill Media	Newsworthy.ai	WordAi
Newswire	AirPR	Evertise	Talkwalker
Lexis N. Newsdesk	Critical Mention		

Table 2 lists several artificial intelligence tools that public relations professionals can utilize. However, since some of these tools have similar characteristics, it is important to focus on the tools that stand out and differentiate themselves from others.

For example, PR.co offers many features such as press release creation, media visibility and campaign management (Pr.co, 2023). BuzzSumo stands out with features such as press release creation and media analysis (Buzzsumo, 2023). Propelmypr focuses on analyzing which campaigns or marketing strategies are working, while SignalAI helps identify risks and opportunities by monitoring media coverage (Propelmypr, 2023; Signal-ai, 2023).

Among these tools, MediaHQ offers many features such as press release creation, campaign management, communication management, and send email (MediahQ, 2023). NetBase distinguishes itself with features such as real-time social media monitoring and crisis communication management (NetBase, 2023). Evertise is a tool that can perform communication management, press monitoring, and target audience analysis (Evertise, 2023). It can be seen from these examples, that each tool focuses on

different features and offers different advantages to public relations profes-
sionals. Which tool to choose depends on the needs and objectives of the
user.

Looking at the qualities of the artificial intelligence tools mentioned
above, it is generally seen that it can perform many functions such as artic-
le writing, creating press releases, analyzing press releases, creating press
rooms, monitoring and analyzing television and radio broadcasts, increa-
sing brand awareness, campaign management, communication manage-
ment, social media analysis, and competitor analysis. Given these functi-
ons, it is possible to say that many artificial intelligence tools can help pub-
lic relations professionals use written and printed tools, as well as audio
and visual tools in the most effective way. For example, a company called
Associated Press (AP) automatically generated some of the news using
artificial intelligence tools in 2013 and thus produced much more news
than human reporters (Ramaswamy, 2017)

Besides, artificial intelligence technologies are also used to divide the
target audience into certain groups and optimize expenditures (Kaput,
2020). These tools can perform functions such as creating personalized
content, sending reminders, making phone calls, responding with voice
commands, and creating appointments (Sheehan, 2018). Thanks to these
features, it is possible to say that artificial intelligence tools will help public
relations professionals do their jobs faster and more effectively.

Public relations is a comprehensive field that the interaction between
institutions and their target audiences (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p.6). Within
this scope, there are various application areas such as media relations, fi-
nancial relations, internal communication, marketing communication, cor-
porate reputation management, corporate advertising, crisis communica-
tion, lobbying, corporate social responsibility, corporate identity and ima-
ge, sponsorship, and corporate event management. Activities in these areas
have become feasible in the internet environment with digitalization.

In this process, which is called the transformation of traditional public
relations into digital public relations -public relations activities performed
on the internet- the main goals include strengthening corporate identity,
increasing product and service sales, gaining the support of target audien-
ces, establishing interactive relationships, and creating a data bank for so-
cial stakeholders (Sayımer, 2008). In this transformation, tools such as
social media, blogs, websites, online press releases, search engine optimi-
zation play an important role. At this point, the tools developed with artifi-

cial intelligence algorithms offer an important contribution to the realization of digital public relations activities.

In this direction, in the next section, the implications of artificial intelligence technology for public relations practices are examined in more detail. Instead of describing in detail the way each public relations application is influenced by artificial intelligence, a more in depth analysis is presented, focusing on specific application areas. In this context, it is discussed how artificial intelligence applications can directly contribute to specific public relations practices such as crisis communication, internal communication, corporate identity and image management, corporate sponsorship, corporate advertising management, marketing communication and social media management.

2.1. The Place of Artificial Intelligence in Crisis Communication Management

One of the important application areas of public relations is crisis management. Although the concept of crisis management was not well known until the 1980s, many disasters that took place after this date caused many organizations to turn to crisis management and public relations firms to adopt crisis management and start to provide consultancy (Okay & Okay, 2015, p.380).

Crisis management, which has become one of the application areas of public relations, is an event that threatens the senior management of an organization, endangers the existence of the organization (Budak & Budak, 1995, p.201), disrupts the functioning structure of the organization, consists of organizational or not organizational factors (Akım, 205, p.171), occurs at an unexpected time, shakes the reputation of the organization and has a limited time for its solution (Winner, 1990, p.87).

In a crisis, when the events are predicted in advance and the steps to be taken are carried out in line with a plan, it is possible to overcome them with the least damage or profitably. This is only possible with crisis management, which is one of the public relations applications (Canöz & Canöz, 2020, p.99). For this reason, a crisis public relations plan should be used to ensure communication in a situation where immediate intervention is required. In a plan, firstly, possibilities should be determined to overcome the crisis with the least damage, the qualities that will enable the business to survive this situation should be determined, and strategies and tactics should be created in line with the measures (Peltekoğlu, 2005, p.315).

In the event of a possible crisis in a company or any organization, public relations practitioners act as problem solvers. Many of these crises are

spreading rapidly today. Social media lies at the core of this. Social media features such as "rapid dissemination of information, interactivity, and limited control" have changed the interaction dimension of the crisis. Changing crisis interactions has also altered the solution to crises. This change is the effective use of artificial intelligence in combating crises (OECD, 2019a, p.63-68).

Media relations, or in other words, media planning, which includes tasks such as the preparation of press releases in the event of a crisis and the selection of the people and media to which press releases will be sent, has become automated with artificial intelligence tools (Şen, 2020). There are many tools such as Pr.co, BuzzSumo, ReleaseLive, Meltwater (press release generator), PressPage, PinGo, Prowly (automatic sending of press releases to customised people), NetBase, SignalAI, Critical Mention (which can follow online media), MuckRack (which collects and analyses news about the brand), Talkwalker (which listens to conversations about the brand on social media) (Capterra, 2023). As mentioned, in addition to these artificial intelligence tools that can help in any crisis, there are also artificial intelligence tools such as SignalAI, which are equipped with qualities that can help in identifying possible opportunities and threats before the crisis occurs and at which points measures should be taken.

2.2. The Place of Artificial Intelligence in Internal Communication Management

Another important application area of public relations is internal communication management. Since organizations make their campaigns and activities aimed at the external target audience first, employees, who are the internal target audience of the organization, are often neglected. In order for every organization to establish a good relationship with its environment, its own internal relations must also be good. In order to create a good relationship between the management of the organization and the employees, there should be a fact based, regular communication (Okay & Okay, 2015, p.281). Internal public relations are used in the realization of communication based on trust and mutual goodwill (Kazancı, 2007, p.243).

The main purpose of internal public relations practice, which is important in providing internal communication within the organization, is to create a good working environment, to encourage employees to express their opinions, to provide a better understanding of the purpose and position of the organization and to enable them to express these better to the external (Peltekoğlu, 2005, p.341). While public relations personnel work

in connection with human resources in large organizations to fulfill this task, they work with people from the personnel unit in small organizations (Jackson & Center, 1995, p.38).

There are many tools that can be used to provide internal public relations communication. These include; employee handbook, corporate brochure, chalkboard, business newspaper / magazine, informative letters for managers/ employees, current special services, internal articles, work reports, business meetings, commissions, working groups, employee interviews, executive conversations, personal interviews, courses, seminars, posters, exhibitions, dia shows, audio-visual shows, movies, television and excursions, picnics, competitions, cocktails, ceremonies-memorial programs, celebrations, banquets, festivals are listed in form of tools such as (Okay & Okay, 2015, p.289; Canöz & Canöz, 2020, p.133).

Within these tools, e-mail, internet site, social networks and intranet are used as tools that enable and accelerate intra organizational work. Intranet is a special web environment in which internal communication and information sharing can be carried out without time and space limits, and only authorized persons can log in with their information (Yavuz, 2019, p.128-129). With the intranet, information flow is provided without the need for corporate publications such as magazines, newspapers and bulletins used in internal communication (Özkan, 2009, p.140).

Intranets help employees with many issues and facilitate their communication on many issues. This system, which is expressed as an asymmetric management style, makes horizontal communication possible instead of bottom top relationship (Okay & Okay, 2015, p.290-300). The basis of this system is regulated by artificial intelligence algorithms. Intranets offer the possibility to create chat rooms where employees and senior management can communicate, share ideas, list shared content and images, decode smart searches to improve employee experiences, and create personalized pages. In addition to helping the existing employees of the organization, intranets help an employee who is just starting to work in the organization with what to do and how to behave. In the intranet system developed with artificial intelligence, it is possible to define the employee's name and contact information, duties and responsibilities, or information related to the workflow process (https://intranet.ai). Thanks to this artificial intelligence system, internal communication has become easier and faster.

2.3. The Place of Artificial Intelligence in Corporate Identity and Image Management

Another important application area of public relations is corporate identity and image management. Changes in today's markets, society, and institutions have brought the need to create distinguished identities and images for every organization. In these times of easy access to products, similar products, and increased competition, the main thing that many organizations need to do is to have a corporate identity that can be perceived differently. In its simplest definition, corporate identity is an integrity created in philosophy, design, communication, and behavior to distinguish an institution from its peers and competitors (Okay & Okay, 2015, p.571). Thanks to the integrity created, institutions can provide the advantage of differentiating from competitors and being distinguished from similar ones.

The corporate image is as important as the corporate identity, which allows each institution to be perceived as different from its competitors. Many definitions have been made about the concept of corporate image. According to Jefkins (1995, p.321), it is the perception formed in the target audience's mind due to knowledge and experience about an institution. Peltekoğlu (2007, p.584), on the other hand, states that it is the sum of emotional and rational evaluations about an organization.

While some of the research on the concept of image perceives image positively, some perceive it as an eyewash tool and fraud (Göksel & Yurdakul, 2002, p.202). In fact, this situation shows that the image of an organization is not perceived the same in every person. The basis of this difference is that it can be perceived correctly or incorrectly according to the experiences and experiences of the target audience (Barich & Kotler, 1991, p.95). Many organizations that are aware of this fact are trying to create a positive image to maintain their current situation and to come to a better place (Dinçer, 2000, p.2). At the same time, image studies have an important effect on ensuring long term success (Seitel, 2001, p.86). For this reason, the corporate identity, which is important for an organization to continue its existence, should be integrated correctly and image perceptions should be positive.

Artificial intelligence tools are used for effective corporate identity and image management. Artificial intelligence is used in identity management to increase corporate identity awareness and determine its reflection on the target audience. Artificial intelligence is used in image management because it offers opportunities such as analyzing posts and comments made in

the media about the institution. These vehicles are; Talkwalker (listening to and analyzing what is being said about the organization), BuzzSumo, NetBase, Oversize, Airpr, Critical Mention, Meltwater, Prowly, MuckRack (analyzing corporate posts, comments, collecting news) are listed as (Capterra, 2023).

Among these tools, artificial intelligence programs called AirPr and NetBase are more preferred by public relations experts. While AirPr is preferred as a tool that can monitor and measure media to ensure the awareness of an institution, NetBase program is preferred as a tool that can listen and monitor social media in real time. AirPR is used for awareness of the identity of an institution, while NetBase can easily analyze what is being talked about or shared about any institution and measure the image level (Capterra, 2023). Thanks to the possibilities of artificial intelligence tools such as collecting and analyzing what is being said about any brand or institution in the media, evaluating comments, it has become possible to determine the image level of a public relations institution.

2.4. The Place of Artificial Intelligence in Corporate Sponsorship Management

Another important application area of public relations is sponsorship management. In its simplest definition, sponsorship is to contribute to a person or an organization in the fields of sports, art, culture, and similar activities by providing money, vehicle, or service support (Peltekoğlu, 2007, p.363). According to Asna (1993, p.147), sponsorship is carried out to provide useful services to society. According to Okay and Okay (2015, p.535), sponsorship is an agreement made for mutual benefit with a field that an organization supports in order to achieve the goals it has set.

In order to obtain the desired effect from a planned sponsorship activity, it is important to determine the target audience correctly. Because the target audience of any sponsored event, institution, or person should be similar to the target audience of the sponsoring organization (Budak & Budak, 2004, p.239-240). At this point, the correct target audience is determined by using artificial intelligence.

For accurate target audience identification, media news and events should be monitored and analyzed, and what is being said about the brand on social media should be monitored and analyzed. In addition to target audience monitoring, it is also necessary to analyze which of the organizations or products to be sponsored are more preferred.

At this point, artificial intelligence tools have been developed to assist public relations experts. These are Evertise (target audience analysis), BuzzSumo (media analysis), SignalAI (monitoring and analysing media news and events), AiPr (media monitoring), Prowly (media monitoring), NetBase (social media monitoring, analysis of trending brands and products), Critical Mention (real time social media monitoring), Meltwater (social media monitoring), Talkwalker (monitoring what is said about the brand) ACR: Automated Content Recognition (automatically recognising video content, faces and objects, identifying corporate logos and icons), are listed as (Capterra, 2023).

In particular, the artificial intelligence tool called ACR was used in NBA tournaments. Thanks to this tool, it was measured how many times the logo of any organisation sponsoring tournaments was seen on the screen and how long it stayed (Foreman, 2020). Thanks to the data provided by the artificial intelligence tools mentioned above, it has become possible to make predictions about how to better provide the right target audience interactions.

Artificial intelligence tools are used in target audience analysis as well as to determine which platform is the most suitable for sponsorship activities or to measure the value of the investment made. In this context, the artificial intelligence tool called Block Six Analytics has made it possible to monitor any sponsorship activity in real time (Crunchbase, 2023). Thanks to this system, sponsors have found the opportunity to develop their campaigns in real time.

2.5. The Place of Artificial Intelligence in Corporate Advertising Management

Another important application area of public relations is corporate advertising management. Corporate advertising, defined as the use of media for a free and aimed at increasing the image of an organization instead of its products and services(Wells & Sprinks, 1999, p.114) is, in broad terms, private advertising aimed at announcing the interests of the organization. Corporate advertising used by public relations experts for promotıon, announcement and ımage creation of an institution (Canöz, 2021, p.69) is a public relations technique that is considered as the voice and face of an organization, not a sub-branch of advertising (Okay & Okay, 2015, p.344).

Organizations can easily reach the desired target audience with advertising. There are artificial intelligence tools that help at many points, such as which channel to use for the transmission of the ad, which target audience

it is aimed at, and save the results of the ad and present them in the form of a report. These are; Propel my pr (campaign analysis), Evertise (target audience analysis), Analisa.io it consists of many tools such as (social media follower analysis), Microsoft Advertising (relevant target audience analysis), Adobe Advertising Cloud (advertising campaign analysis) (Capterra, 2023). These tools are used in both corporate ads and product ads at the same time.

The use of artificial intelligence tools is not limited to the aspects mentioned above, has also been used to ceate new opportunities for advertising writing and advertising visibility. For example; in 2018, the first 60-second commercial was released in which the AI engine created the script flow and outline for Lexus, a luxury car brand produced by Japanese automaker Toyota (Spangler, 2018).

Artificial intelligence, which is used in a wide range of areas from advertising analysis to advertising writing, has also been used to increase the visibility of ads. At this point, during a conversation with an artificial intelligence mobile phone or in conversations on intra-environment media, ads for a brand whose name we use are viewed as advertising suggestions on other intraenvironment media that we are users of, especially on social media that we are users of. Artificial intelligence tools such as Talkwalker, which make this possible, are used to serve this purpose (Talkwalker, 2023).

Artificial intelligence, which helps increase the likelihood of ads being seen, is also used to prevent unwanted ads from being seen. The effect of artificial intelligence tools in this direction can also be seen in the e-mails we frequently use today. Artificial intelligence tools that automatically check the content of e-mails can easily parse ads and send them to spam boxes (Yılmaz, 2019, p.17). As a result, it is used for purposes such as corporate advertisements, artificial intelligence advertising analysis, advertising writing, and personalized advertising visibility.

2.6. The Place of Artificial Intelligence in Marketing Communication

Another application area of public relations, known as marketing communication, is described as being used to directly support an organization's marketing objectives (Kalender, 2013, p.13), and it refers to the communication process of a company's programmed, conscious, and coordinated efforts to persuade its customers (Odabaşı & Oyman, 2005, p.82)

The management of elements such as public relations, advertising, sales promotion, and direct marketing is referred to as marketing communi-

cation (Bozkurt, 2000, p.83). The combined use of these elements is called integrated marketing communication (Wilcox et al., 2001, p.14). In the mentioned integrated marketing communication, public relations are seen as a tool for building trust (Peltekoğlu, 2007, p.28).

Public relations, which is used as a tool to build trust in marketing communications, will increase its impact in marketing communications in the future. Because mass advertising has become unable to respond as much as before. As a result, it is emphasized that marketing and public relations will merge (Okay & Okay, 2015, p.517). As a result, a business uses public relations methods and techniques to support its marketing activities in order to increase its sales.

It is possible to encounter artificial intelligence applications in marketing communication. Especially on online shopping platforms, there are artificial intelligence tools that list products based on the interests of the target audience, set restrictions, generate pricing information, and address us by our name. Concrete examples of this situation can be seen today, particularly on online shopping sites. For example, when visiting Amazon's shopping site, a system is used that addresses us by our name and then lists products relevant to our interests (Nilson, 2019, p.632).

Another example is the applications of platforms such as Netflix, Disney Plus and Amazon Prime, which operate in the field of online broadcasting. These platforms prepare movie recommendations according to the age, gender, race and interests of their users, and even present the covers of the movies to their users in a special ways. At this point, artificial intelligence follows our digital footprints on previous purchases or similar sites. In short, artificial intelligence records our footprints and create a large data pool. Institutions that benefit from this pool can develop their marketing strategies according to customer expectations and needs. In this regard, there are artificial intelligence tools such as "Marketing 360" (social media and e-commerce management) and Marketing Master IO (creating message campaigns) that public relations professionals use (Marketing 360, 2023; Marketing Master IO, 2023).

2.7. The Place of Artificial Intelligence in Social Media Management

Another important application area of public relations is social media management. In recent years, the rapid development and proliferation of internet technology have led to the emergence of new communication technologies. The advent of these new communication technologies has resulted in organizations changing their management and implementation

strategies. It has made interaction and feedback between organizations and their target audiences possible. As a result, new technologies have influenced existing public relations applications, creating new application areas. Among these areas, the most crucial is the management of social media, which has become indispensable for organizations due to the advantages it offers.

Social media has some fundamental features that make it indispensable. These are listed as participation, openness, dialogue, community, and connectivity (Okay & Okay, 2015, p.632). The feedback opportunity provided by social media and its ability to turn communication into a dialogue align with the structure of public relations based on two way communication (Özgen, 2012, p.13). Additionally, the continuous updates, the ability to use it in multiple ways, and the advantages of virtual sharing have led public relations professionals to develop new strategies instead of traditional ones (İşler et al., 2013, p.174).

The virtual communities that have emerged with the development of social media provide opportunities to reach and understand people with similar interests, establish mutual relationships between these groups and institutions, and monitor the actions of these groups against potential risks, making social media a powerful tool for public relations (Sayımer, 2012, p.75). Here, public relations professionals are responsible for monitoring the consumption and entertainment habits, brand preferences, and leisure activities of the groups on social media for the institutions they work for (Özel & Sert, 2015, p.121).

What makes social media different from traditional media is that it has tools such as social networking sites, blogs, podcasts, forums, content communities, wikis and microplogs (Mayfield, 2011, p.6). Social media tools with their own unıque qualities have led to the expansion of the application areas and forms of public relations.

Another public relations application area where artificial intelligence tools are used is social media management. Since social media has many qualities such as "creating and publishing its content, reducing dependence on newspapers and television, communicating with the target audience interactively, and receiving target audience reactions directly and quickly" (Canöz & Canöz, 2020, p.259-260), it has become an indispensable application area for public relations experts.

Due to these features of social media, its transformation into an indispensable application area for public relations is based on the increase in the number of users with the development of internet networks. According to

Internet World Statistics 2022 data, 66.2% of the world's population currently has internet access. 83.3% of the total population in Turkey is an internet user (Internet World Statistics, 2022). According to We Are Social 2022 report, it is stated that social media usage in Turkey increased by 8.9 million between 2021-2022, reaching a total of 68.9 million social media users (We Are Social, 2022). It is possible to say that the majority of this population is social media users. For this reason, public relations experts inevitably find themselves in social media management.

Artificial intelligence tools have been developed that can assist public relations experts in social media management, which has become a mandatory application area for public relations. Programs such as NetBase, Critical Mention, Meltwater, which we mentioned under the title of public relations software, offer the opportunity to monitor social media in real time (Capterra, 2023). It is possible to say that the job of public relations experts will get easier due to the opportunity these tools offer.

Public relations applications using artificial intelligence are not limited to those mentioned. These tools are increasing and diversifying every day, and as a result, they have influenced many public relations applications such as financial relations, corporate social responsibility and lobbying and have found functions in these areas. It is possible to summarize these in general as follows (Valin & Gregory, 2021, p.21);

- Profiling stakeholders,
- Writing content about the institution,
- Perceiving potential risks,
- Predicting media trends,
- Analyzing the relationship and sensitivity among the employees of the institution,
- Helping to evaluate reports,
- There are public relations functions such as running and analyzing public relations campaigns that help the organization's workflow.

As a result, artificial intelligence, which increase in number and diversifies its functions day by day, helps public relations professionals both in applications and in using tools. Due to the qualities that artificial intelligence offers to public relations, the field of public relations has inevitably been affected by artificial intelligence tools. What these effects are discussed in detail in the next section.

3. Contribution of Artificial Intelligence Tools to the Field of Public Relations

Depending on the development of artificial intelligence tools, many companies around the world have investigated how these tools have affected or will affect professions. In a study conducted in the US, Price Water House Cooper (PwC), a world-renowned consulting firm, estimated that by 2030, 38% of jobs will be replaced by robots and artificial intelligence tools. When we look at the point reached today, there is a possibility that these applications will be realized in a shorter time than expected (Özoğul, 2017). In an interview with Forbes Technology Council, Alexandro Pando stated that "artificial intelligence continues to advance, it will eventually affect all sectors, so regardless of the sector, those who can integrate artificial intelligence into their business will be the winners of the future. It emphasizes why interaction will happen soon (Pando, 2018).

In the research conducted by the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA), in which 2689 communicators from 46 countries participated in 2019, it was found that the majority of the participants (77.3%) had the prediction that artificial intelligence technologies will change communication professions (Zerfass et al., 2019, p.61). In this context , it is possible to say that one of the communication professions that will be affected by artificial intelligence will be the public relations profession. Therefore, it is necessary to realize that artificial intelligence tools have an impact on the public relations process and these effects will continue to increase in the future (Galloway & Swiatek, 2018, p.738).

The main detail that should be focused on in this idea is how public relations applications are related to artificial intelligence technologies, what will replace the applications and what contribution they will make to the field (Valin, 2018, p.3). In this context, classifications have been made indicating what artificial intelligence has and will contribute to the field of public relations.

In the article titled "8 Innovations to watch in Public Relations Technology" prepared by Strong and published in Public Relations Today, 8 different innovations are mentioned for public relations experts to do a better job (Strong, 2021). These;

- Suggesting people to cantact (Evertise),
- Listening journalists and increasing the likelihood of a news being published by making purposeful restrictions (Pitchprefer),

- Enabling better collaboration with public relations experts (MuckRack),
- Able to keep reports of the news presented by monitoring the media (Prowly),
- Able to convert speech to text (Critical Mention),
- Able to report mentions from earned media (MeltWater),
- Able to report results that potential buyers have made a purchase (Cision),
- Able to send advertisements to the person who reads the presented news (Cision), it is sorted in the form.

The 8 innovations stated by Strong show that artificial intelligence tools will contribute to the field of public relations in "determining the media or person to communicate with, monitoring the media, converting speeches into text, keeping media and marketing reports, and determining to whom the advertisement will be send.

Ilıcak (2020, p.2295), stated the contributions of using artificial intelligence tools to the field of public relations as follows;

- Relieve workload,
- Leave free time,
- Focus on various project,
- Ability to solve problems in a short time,
- Ability to control media,
- Easy content creation,
- Producing creative works.

From this perspective, it is possible to evaluate the contribution of artificial intelligence tools to the field of public relations from two perspectives. Firstly, it will ease the workload of public relations experts, and secondly, it is possible that the work can be done in a short time as artificial intelligence tools have become capable of doing these jobs alone. In fact, these two situations vary depending on the point of view. Because it not only lightens the workload of public relations specialists and allows them to do different jobs, but also can do the job that many public relations specialists need to do on their own.

Galloway and Swiatek (2018, p.3-4), who stated that even if this situation is not a problem for now, it may be possible that the concern of "not needing an expert working in the field of public relations" may arise in the

future, stated the contribution of artificial intelligence to the field of public relations in the context of "supportive and cautious perceptions". These;

- Public relations is based on establishing a relationship between stakeholders with the principle of "close interaction". However, there is no such situation in artificial intelligence. Since there is no interaction in artificial intelligence, there is more "transparency and authenticity" perception.
- Public relations experts acting within the discipline of "reputation and trust" can build trust with people, not robots. Therefore, artificial intelligence has the problem of creating "trust".
- When negative news appears in the media, public relations specialists should respond quickly to these news. Artificial intelligence tools are used for this situation. Because artificial intelligence tools can send warnings to public relations experts by detecting a negative news in the media as soon as it appears because they monitor the media.
- Since the critical thinking skills of human beings are not available in artificial intelligence tools, the field of public relations will be less affected by artificial intelligence. However, artificial intelligence tools are used in many areas such as research, review, content development, programme evaluation and problem tracking.

These perceptions show that it would not be correct to say that the contribution of artificial intelligence to the field of public relations is only "negative" or only "positive". Instead, it would be more accurate to say that artificial intelligence tools in the field of public relations have both positive and negative aspects according to the purpose of use.

According to the purpose of use, public relations specialists can facilitate business processes and applications with artificial intelligence tools. Because the most important of the subtleties of the profession is to analyze the target audience and competitors in order to reach the right target audience. In a study conducted in this context, it was determined that "with the use of artificial intelligence tools, it is possible to reduce the time spent on public relations measurement technologies, research, analysis and reporting by 75%" (Sheehan, 2018). This result shows that; The use of artificial intelligence by the public relations specialist will allow him to access the data he wants in a short time.

Although the contributions of artificial intelligence technologies to the field of public relations and experts are apparently high, the impact of hu-

man skills will always be felt. Because, although artificial intelligence provides the data automatically, humans will be responsible for the final review of this data (McMenemy, 2018). Likewise, basic human traits such as "empathy, trust, humor and relating" cannot be transferred to artificial intelligence tools in the current situation (Thalassinou, 2018). This situation shows that humans will be needed to finally control the data obtained with artificial intelligence tools

In the light of all these data, it is possible to say that the contribution of artificial intelligence technology to the field of public relations varies according to the purpose of use and that these contributions will be integrated more and more into the field day by day and that these contributions will increase in the future.

4. Literature Review on Digital Public Relations and Artificial Intelligence

There are a number of national and foreign studies on artificial intelligence and digital public relations. These studies are as follows; Galloway and Swiatek (2018), "Public relations and artificial intelligence: It's not (just) about robots" is the first of these studies. The researchers conducted the study with the aim of identifying the roles that artificial intelligence could play in the future and the impact it could have on public relations practitioners, clients and employers. The theoretical study concluded that it is not yet possible to reach definitive conclusions about the depth and breadth of the effects of artificial intelligence on the public relations profession, but that it is nevertheless necessary to bring an adequate understanding of the current and potential use of artificial intelligence tools, given the high number of those who focus on their optimistic benefits.

Another study conducted by Seyitoğlu (2019) is a master's thesis titled "Changing Customer Experience in Digital Public Relations in Turkey: Chatbot Applications". This study was conducted to determine how Chatbot applications affect digital public relations applications. The study was carried out by interviewing two groups of 6 students and 8 experts with the focus group study method. As a result of the study, it was concluded that the students were optimistic about artificial intelligence tools, were cautious and thought that their use would become widespread in the future.

Another study published in the field by USC Annenberg (2019) is the global communication research titled "Public Relations/Technology: The Future Of Technology In Communication". This research was conducted

to provide information on where companies should focus their communication efforts. In this context, data was collected through a survey conducted by the Center for Public Relations (CPR). As a result of the study, it was found that while public relations professionals are aware that artificial intelligence is changing the media environment, they are not aware of how quickly this change could occur.

Fidan and Rençber (2019) explored the topic of "The Role of Artificial Intelligence as a Moderator in the Two-Way Symmetric Public Relations Process" in their research within the field. The researchers conducted this study to put forward an opinion on the level of artificial intelligence as a moderator in the two way symmetric public relations process. In this context, they discussed the issue conceptually and concluded through a literature review that the integration of artificial intelligence into the public relations process depends on the way public relations will use this technology in the future.

A study by Ilıcak (2020) titled "Artificial Intelligence with a Public Relations Perspective" delves into how artificial intelligence is viewed from the standpoint of public relations. In this work, Ilıcak explores AI through the lens of public relations practices. As a result of the data obtained through literature review, he concluded that artificial intelligence programmes are frequently used in public relations discipline.

Another study prepared by Valin and Gregory (2021) and translated by Çisil Sohodol is "Ethical Guide for Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations". The aim of this study is to increase the awareness of professionals, academics and students in the field of public relations on how the decision making process will work in the problem arising from the use of artificial intelligence. As a result of the ethical guide prepared, it was stated that artificial intelligence can be both a good power and a danger, but this can vary according to the choice of use, so public relations professionals should use artificial intelligence tools and that there are many tools that will help them in the field, and even some of them are used unknowingly.

Çataldaş and Özgen (2021) conducted a study titled "Algorithms and Artificial Intelligence as a Digital Public Relations Tool." This research aims to identify the artificial intelligence tools utilized in the field of public relations. In this in depth study, they concluded that artificial intelligence tools have features such as digital asset management and content management.

Kayım's (2021) doctoral thesis, titled "The Place of Artificial Intelligence in Public Relations Applications," explores the role of artificial intelli-

gence technologies in public relations. In this study in depth interviews were conducted with people working in the sector and the survey technique was applied to these people. As a result of the data obtained through content analysis, it was concluded that artificial intelligence does not replace public relations, on the contrary, it supports and accelerates the work.

Another study conducted by Çağlayan (2021) in the field is "The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on the Future of Public Relations: A Field Study on the Axis of Public Relations Professionals in Turkey". The researcher conducted this study to identify the technologies, tools and software used by public relations professionals and to determine their effects on public relations processes. In this context, the researcher collected data from 77 public relations agencies that are members of the Public Relations Association of Turkey and live in Istanbul using a questionnaire survey. In the study, it was concluded that the participants used at least one of the artificial intelligence tools, that these tools positively affected their business processes and that they saw them as opportunities.

Another study conducted by Yıldız (2021) from the field is the study titled "Investigation of Theses on Artificial Intelligence in the Field of Communication". The researcher aimed to determine the field of communication covered by the theses on artificial intelligence in the field of communication, the number and the methods used. In this context, it was concluded that there were 8 thesis studies in the literature and the majority of them used qualitative research methods.

Conclusion

This study, conducted to determine the role that artificial intelligence, whose future position and effects are uncertain, can play in the field of digital public relations and to increase awareness in this area, aims to evaluate the impact of artificial intelligence on public relations applications. In this context, questions such as "how can artificial intelligence affect digital public relations applications?", "are there artificial intelligence tools that can perform tasks on behalf of public relations professionals and lighten their workload?", and "does artificial intelligence have the potential to shape and change the public relations profession?" have been investigated. The method used to answer these questions is a comprehensive literature review.

According to the data in the literature, the existence of artificial intelligence tools that can support public relations specialists in various processes such as reporting digital public relations activities, media planning,

article writing, creating press releases, analyzing press releases, creating press rooms, preparing and analyzing television and radio broadcasts, increasing brand awareness, campaign and communication management, social media and competitor analysis, and identifying and analyzing demographic groups for accurate target audience selection has been identified.

These tools play an important role in the constitute and implementation of digital public relations strategies. In particular, the management of brand awareness and reputation is facilitated by using artificial intelligence supported tools for social media analysis, monitoring and evaluating brand interactions on digital platforms. In addition, artificial intelligence contributes to the creation of more effective marketing strategies by analysing user data in digital channels in identifying the right target audience and segmentation processes. In this way, artificial intelligence tools that will adapt to the complex and dynamic nature of digital public relations support the experts in the sector to work more efficiently and successfully.

Artificial intelligence tools have qualities that can be effective in digital public relations applications. These tools play an important role in various public relations applications such as media communication, internal communication management, corporate advertising management, crisis communication, corporate identity and image management, sponsorship, marketing communication and social media management by analysing data obtained from digital platforms.

They offer public relations professionals the opportunity to work more effectively and efficiently with their capabilities such as data analysis, automation, personalisation and fast decision-making. In particular, artificial intelligence can help to manage digital public relations more effectively in areas such as creating effective communication strategies by monitoring user interactions on social media platforms, reacting quickly in crisis situations and strengthening brand image by identifying digital trends.

Artificial intelligence tools have qualities that can effectively fulfil the tasks on behalf of public relations professionals and alleviate their workload. It facilitates the time consuming and tiring work of public relations professionals working as communication technicians. Tasks such as press monitoring, writing explanation texts for target audiences, analysing competitors or determining the people to be contacted can be automated thanks to artificial intelligence tools. Therefore, while reducing the workload of public relations experts, it also allows them to work more efficiently and effectively.

Artificial intelligence has a great potential for change and transformation in the field of public relations. It is expected that the use of artificial intelligence tools that perform tasks such as creating and analysing data in public relations applications in a short time and effectively will become widespread. However, although it is difficult to form a clear opinion on how this situation will affect the public relations profession, there are some important points. First of all, the automation of some jobs with the increasing use of artificial intelligence tools may reduce the need for public relations personnel working in roles such as communication technicians.

This situation may create unemployment concerns in the sector and create the need for employees to learn new skills. Moreover, the fact that artificial intelligence tools do not yet have humanoid characteristics may create a deficiency, especially in public relations, where factors such as "empathy" and "trust" are important. For this reason, the final control of reports and data produced by artificial intelligence tools should be carried out by humans.

However, despite these negativities, with the increasing use of artificial intelligence tools, public relations employees may have more free time and can devote this time to self improvement. In addition, with the help of artificial intelligence tools, more effective and efficient communication strategies can be created and public relations activities can be carried out more successfully. As a result, the advantages and disadvantages that artificial intelligence tools bring to the public relations sector have not yet been clearly determined. However, it is clear that these technologies will play an important role in the field of public relations and will change the way of doing business in the sector. Therefore, it is important for public relations professionals to closely follow artificial intelligence technologies and adapt to them when necessary.

As in many areas of daily life, those who can utilise the power of artificial intelligence in digital public relations gain a significant advantage. Those who can integrate artificial intelligence into their systems can easily access big data about the target audiences they want. In this way, they can plan their future services or behaviours more quickly and intelligently. In addition, those who hold this power can manipulate their competitors and direct them in a direction they determine.

In summary, there are artificial intelligence tools that can be used in public relations applications and can help public relations experts to perform their duties. However, it should not be forgotten that the use of these tools brings both positive and negative effects. Ethical issues may arise and

limits need to be set on how to utilise the power of the tools. While this situation emphasises the power of artificial intelligence tools to shape and change the public relations profession, it also shows that it has become a controversial issue.

This situation, which is an important issue for researchers and public relations professionals, can be considered as a study that will contribute to the literature and serve as a source for future research. In conclusion, it should not be forgotten that studies on the role and effects of artificial intelligence in digital public relations can fill an important gap and shape the future of the sector.

"If public relations activities are carried out using artificial intelligence tools, who or what will be held responsible for the results?"

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DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Ayşe Gedikçi ÖNDOĞAN∗

Introduction

The communication activities conducted by organizations with their internal target audiences are referred to as internal communication. Within internal communication, adopting applicable, modern, and innovative approaches that encompass collaboration and information exchange activities is crucial. Establishing and sustaining a communication system based on mutual understanding in an environment with individuals possessing various characteristics, cultures, and expectations is necessary for creating a trustful atmosphere (Hola & Pikhart, 2014: 167). In this context, public relations practices that distinguish internal communication from mere information transfer and collaboration functions, and instead transform it into a tool for enhancing employee relations, mutual understanding, and participation, come to the forefront.

Communication systems shaped by human experience are evolving with the influence of technology (Crowley & Heyer, 2019: 10). Despite advancements in automation and communication systems, the key element for success and stability in internal communication, where the human element is at the forefront, is the employees of the organization. By incorporating digital media applications, which affect the functioning of institutions as well as the lives of individuals, into internal communication systems, it is aimed to increase their effectiveness as well as their use. As the use of digital media applications in internal public relations increases, it is important to determine their effects on internal communication. This study examines the relationship between internal communication and digital public relations practices. By evaluating the positive and negative impacts of digital public relations applications on internal communication, the study aims to provide a valuable resource for those working in the field.

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1. Internal Communication

Communication is a multi-channel process aimed at ensuring mutual understanding, acceptance, and cooperation through the sharing of emotions, thoughts, and information (Cüceloğlu, 2005: 27-32). According to the Turkish Language Association, it is defined as "the transmission of emotions, thoughts, or information through any conceivable means; communication, news dissemination, communication." Communication is a key element in organizing interactions between individuals and groups at various levels or areas of expertise, coordinating daily tasks, and, if necessary, restructuring them.

The diversity in communication methods among employees in different departments can lead to communication barriers or lack of communication. In addition to establishing internal communication channels, formulating communication structures and processes according to employee needs also facilitates increased employee satisfaction (Bharadwaj, 2014: 190). Internal communication enables mutual communication and information exchange between managers and employees, contributing to the development of positive relationships and the systematic and continuous maintenance of organizational operations (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 112).

Internal communication is of special importance as it influences not only internal relations but also external relations (Hola & Pikhart, 2014: 161). Messages prepared for organizational owners, partners, managers, and employees in line with corporate goals require the use of specific tools for transmission. The presence of an organization-specific communication system tailored to employee profiles directly affects both the continuity of organizational operations and the quality and efficiency of the organization's activities (Arklan & Taşdemir, 2010). Internal communication, which manages communication activities between the organization and its employees, has important tasks such as mutual conversation, understanding each other, influencing each other, establishing bonds between the parties and reducing uncertainty (Dance, 1970), solving problems and increasing productivity (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020: 14), and ensuring the continuity of organizational operations (Welch, 2013: 615).

All communication processes are important in ensuring the functioning of the organization, from creating the messages needed to structuring communication channels, from evaluating feedback to making the necessary changes. The organization must provide updates on financial structures and general conditions such as new investments, partnerships, growth rates, and profit distribution. Everyone in the organization, from top

executives to the lowest-level employees, should be informed, and activities aimed at increasing education and motivation should be conducted. Effective internal communication is a key element in maintaining organizational continuity (Welch, 2013: 615).

Communication, an essential activity in employees' daily lives, affects not only their social lives but also their work lives. The way managers and supervisors at all levels communicate effectively with employees not only helps achieve corporate objectives but also enhances communication among employees themselves (Pozantı, 2019: 47). According to a study involving over 3.3 million employees (Gallup, 2024), when employees' basic needs, as well as their motivational, teamwork, and personal development needs, are met and a culture of trust and support is established within the organization, they are found to be more participatory, productive, and efficient.

In addition to monetary gains, employees also require spiritual satisfactions such as job satisfaction, respect, and recognition. Therefore, the presence of an internal communication system within the organization is considered a crucial factor in meeting these needs by managers (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 112). Public relations practices that enhance the effectiveness of internal communication serve as an important tool in creating a collaborative environment and aligning employee expectations with corporate interests. According to data from the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, ineffective communication can become a significant barrier to corporate interests and disrupt the fundamental functions of the organization (Hola & Pikhart, 2014: 167). This situation necessitates an effective corporate communication policy that ensures the functionality of management functions such as decision-making, planning, organizing, directing, and controlling to achieve systematic and efficient organizational operations (Tengilimoğlu et al., 2015).

Internal communication activities are conducted formally and informally (Sungur & Toksü, 2010). Formal communication occurs in alignment with the hierarchy, both horizontally (across the same hierarchical level) and vertically (from top to bottom or bottom to top) (Okay & Okay, 2014: 282). Formal communication is related to the organization's hierarchical relationships and authority structures (Mert, 2019: 1515). It is a one-way communication where control is in the hands of management, typically involving directives, announcements, and mandatory rules, and is characterized by its top-down nature (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 112). Formal internal communication practices include the transmission of important

information from management to employees through messages, meetings, corporate publications, corporate websites, and other channels, as well as training and motivational activities related to work and individual development, and activities aimed at embedding the corporate culture such as events, ceremonies, and celebrations through official channels (Sungur & Toksü, 2010).

Communication that naturally develops within routine operations and lacks specific rules is referred to as informal communication. This includes team collaborations, project management, as well as various forms of informal communication such as casual conversations and gossip, which may occur outside the hierarchy. It is an informal, difficult-to-control form of communication that occurs as a result of employees' need for human communication. New communication technologies have a significant impact on an organization's image and reputation due to the opportunities and threats they present. Therefore, it is essential to manage informal communication systems just like formal communication systems. In cases where formal communication is insufficient, the need for information cannot be adequately met or continuity cannot be ensured, it is important to shape the internal communication system in a way that includes unofficial channels in order to prevent discontent, insecurity, misinformation and gossip that may occur among employees (Becerikli, 2014: 87).

The goal of internal communication is to establish an effective network of relationships not only between managers and employees but also among employees themselves (Babacan & Ekiz, 2008: 253). Internal communication activities aimed at fostering understanding, sympathy, and trust among employees involve a range of formal and informal communication activities, from the use of formal communication channels to office conversations (Welch, 2013: 615). These activities aim to organize, control, and maintain the continuity of all communication channels, whether formal or informal, top-down or bottom-up, within the organization.

1.2. Objectives of Internal Communication

Organizations that aim to develop a relationship based on mutual trust and goodwill with their employees leverage the power of internal communication to create a positive perception and reputation and establish and embed organizational identity (Peltekoğlu, 1993: 209). In this context, the primary goal of internal communication is to ensure alignment between the organization's objectives and employees' needs. As communication systems evolve with technological advancements (Crowley & Heyer, 2019:

10), internal communication plays a crucial role in successfully implementing change within organizations (Bharadwaj, 2014: 190).

Internal communication has three fundamental functions: informing, motivating, and managing. Elements such as mutual understanding, empathy, helpfulness, and transparency, as well as the ability of organizations to convey their identity and goals, attract attention, reduce uncertainty, respond quickly during crises, and manage long-term relationships, are all among the objectives of internal communication (Becerikli, 2014; Canöz & Canöz, 2020; Okay & Okay, 2014; Ruck & Men, 2021). Research indicates that effective communication increases employee satisfaction, commitment, and motivation (Babacan & Ekiz, 2008: 253), positively affect the success of organizational processes (Babacan & Ekiz, 2008), enhances individual productivity when employees are personally satisfied (Hola & Pikhart, 2014: 162), and leads to favorable organizational outcomes (Musser & Taboada, 2020).

Internal communication activities also play a significant role in determining employees' expectations from the organization (Okay & Okay, 2014: 285). Communication, which functions to facilitate information sharing, solidarity, coordination, and motivation among employees, is fundamentally an essential aspect of work relationships. The growing importance of understanding the positive impacts of internal communication on employee satisfaction (Babacan & Ekiz, 2008: 263), productivity (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010: 255), and effectiveness (Lee & Li, 2020) reflects this trend.

Employee groups, ranging from top executives to cleaners, comprise a diverse spectrum with varying individual and socio-cultural characteristics, as well as different demands and expectations. However, they all share common expectations (Peltekoğlu, 1993: 205). In addition to the physical and social needs of the employees within the organization, it is important to determine their demands and expectations regarding their psychological needs. Information about employees has an important role in creating a healthy communication environment. Accurate use of internal communication strategies not only ensures employee satisfaction and motivation but also enhances organizational commitment (Bharadwaj, 2014: 191).

The fundamental reasons organizations communicate with their employees are as follows (Musser & Taboada, 2020):

- **Defining, inspiring, and preparing**: Crafting messages related to the organization's purpose, mission, vision, and strategies.

- **Informing**: Communicating information about the organization's daily operations and services to designated target audiences.
- **Teaching**: Addressing the training and orientation needs of employees to enhance their knowledge and skills.
- **Taking action**: Organizing daily tasks or issuing necessary directives for the implementation of organizational programs; prompting employees to take action or consult management regarding job/process matters.
- **Decision-Making**: Creating communication environments to make the best decisions in various situations and ensuring that managers communicate with other managers or employees about organizational actions.
- **Collaborating**: Encouraging two-way communication and information exchange to jointly fulfill responsibilities related to work and operations.

1.3. Characteristics Required for Internal Communication Messages

The effective and smooth functioning of the communication pattern with employees in alignment with corporate goals relies on the content and proper delivery of messages (Okay & Okay, 2002: 260). Messages used in internal communication must be designed considering the educational background, preferences, and psycho-social characteristics of the target audience. Both the structure and content of the messages, as well as the selection of appropriate communication tools and channels based on the characteristics of the target audience, directly affect the effectiveness of communication. Delivering messages to employees either individually or collectively using suitable tools, monitoring their progress, evaluating feedback, and identifying and eliminating existing and potential obstacles will be effective. The use of information obtained during the research and planning phases of public relations, which constitute the fundamental steps, will facilitate the creation and dissemination of messages to the relevant parties. A well-structured communication system can provide high job satisfaction and improve organizational success by strengthening the relationship network with employees at all levels of the organization (Arklan & Taşdemir, 2010: 32).

In internal communication, messages should be tailored to specific purposes and should be delivered using various tools according to the characteristics of the target audience. Accordingly, the essential characteristics

that internal communication messages should possess are generally as follows (Ruck & Men, 2021; Welch, 2012):

- **Purpose-Driven**: The purpose of sending the message must be clearly stated. The recipient should understand the intent of the message and what actions are required without needing additional information.
- **Clear and understandable**: Messages should be as clear and understandable as possible. Complex and ambiguous expressions should be avoided to ensure that the recipient easily comprehends the message.
- **Concise and direct**: Messages should be concise and direct. They should focus solely on the relevant work-related information and avoid unnecessary details.
- **Reliable**: Messages are important to the recipients, and they should not doubt the accuracy and reliability of the message.
- **Appropriate to recipient's characteristics**: Messages should be suited to the socio-cultural characteristics, knowledge level, and work-related needs of the recipient.
- **Timely**: Messages should be sent at a time that aligns with the work-related objectives and the recipient's situation. Incorrect timing may cause work disruptions and undermine the recipient's trust in the sender or the message.
- **Proper communication tools/channels**: The content of the message and the characteristics of the recipient should determine the choice of communication tools or channels. The effectiveness of the message's delivery, its timely reach to the recipient, and the receipt of necessary feedback depend on the appropriate use of communication tools/channels.

These characteristics are crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of internal communication and ensuring the success of the communication process. Properly creating and delivering messages significantly impacts the quality of internal communication and plays a critical role in increasing employee satisfaction and achieving corporate goals.

2. The Role of Public Relations in Internal Communication

Public relations, which is tasked with establishing and improving relations between the organization and the public, is "concerned with communicating information through reliable and ethical communication met-

hods" (IPRA, 2024). Public relations is a phenomenon that requires a systematic work towards the target audience in line with a specific purpose, has stages and is continuous (Arklan & Taşdemir, 2010: 35). PR contributes to achieving organizational objectives by facilitating employee support through various activities.

The development of communication strategies for maintaining corporate functioning and the preparation of public relations programs in this direction are essential for the success of corporate communication. It is necessary not only to define formal or informal communication processes to meet the communication needs of the organization's target audience but also to share these processes with employees and support them with PR activities (Pozantı, 2019: 48). Enhancing communication and interaction opportunities to build mutual trust falls within the scope of PR (Peltekoğlu, 1993: 206).

Internal PR also plays a crucial role in evaluating internal communication activities (Musser & Taboada, 2020). One of the key elements for achieving corporate success is establishing an effective relationship network with employees, which enhances the quality of communication with them (Babacan & Ekiz, 2008: 251). By eliminating information imbalances within the organization, PR makes employees more efficient in their organizational activities (Okay & Okay, 2014: 288). Building trust, agreement, and commitment between the organization and employees positively impacts employee participation, sharing, and loyalty (Lee & Li, 2020). Utilizing the facilitative role of internal communication networks can ensure the effective execution of internal communication activities among both management and employees, as well as among employees themselves (Arklan & Taşdemir, 2010: 51-52).

Internal communication can be facilitated through various PR tools or practices across printed (paper-based), electronic (technology-based), and face-to-face environments, depending on the characteristics of the recipient and the nature of the work (Welch, 2012: 248). Each category contains different methods with effective communication potential. However, in order to be effective, communication methods must be appropriate and acceptable to the individual and behavioral characteristics of the employees as well as the nature of the work. The increasing importance of PR in determining the most suitable tools and methods for corporate communication reflects the need for methods that accommodate varying work and employee characteristics. Effective communication requires active listening, and effective PR involves understanding the target audience and ac-

curately identifying their needs. Support from PR practices can provide significant advantages in this context.

One of the most critical issues in internal communication is "eliminating or reducing dissatisfaction" (Peltekoğlu, 1993: 204). Internal PR activities can help employees manage negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and fear, and harness positive emotions like love, joy, pride, and gratitude. Over time, this can enhance trust, commitment, and participation in the organization (Ruck & Men, 2021: 188). The success of internal PR activities can lead to increased employee acceptance, engagement, and value for their work, facilitating the achievement of organizational goals.

The functions of PR in internal communication are generally outlined as follows (Aydede, 2009; Arklan & Taşdemir, 2010):

- Preventing random relationships between employees and their supervisors/managers and ensuring necessary coordination.
- Establishing effective and functional rules for internal communication.
- Managing horizontal and vertical communication to ensure a healthy and efficient work process.
- Regularly communicating organizational matters, information, and messages to employees through various tools.
- Addressing employees' training, motivation, information, orientation, and psychological support needs.
- Resolving disputes between the organization and employees through mutual communication in periodically held meetings.
- Promoting organizational culture through internal publications and activities.
- Providing consultancy to managers for planned activities.
- Ensuring that internal communication is conducted systematically and continuously.

3. The Use of Digital Public Relations in Internal Communication

Internal public relations (PR) activities play a crucial role in shaping organizational identity, motivating employees, and strengthening corporate communication (Babacan & Ekiz, 2008: 270). The effectiveness of communication is enhanced not only by message creation and delivery but also by facilitating the rapid and accurate receipt and evaluation of feedback through information technologies. The implementation of internal PR strategies requires a clear definition of communication strategies in line with the organization's purpose and objectives, and an evaluation of whether

internal communication activities are conducted accordingly (Musser & Taboada, 2020). Organizations that leverage PR activities to understand, meet expectations, and motivate employees to benefit from the opportunities provided by communication technologies.

With the advancement and widespread adoption of communication technologies, the variety of communication channels between organizations and their target audiences has increased, diversifying internal PR activities in line with organizational goals. In this context, digital PR requires a robust communication strategy and management approach (Koçyiğit, 2017: 42). Developments in the internet and communication technologies have affected communication methods for both individuals and organizations. As individuals' interest in social media platforms has grown, the use of the internet and social media platforms by organizations in PR has become a necessity rather than a choice. As the number and usage of digital platforms on the internet increase, organizations are developing strategies to incorporate these platforms into their communication networks. Support from digital PR applications can lead to more scientific and effective results in developing relationships between organizations and their employees.

The efficiency of technology has significantly accelerated the development of collaboration and remote work opportunities, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic (Ruck & Men, 2021). The transformation of corporate operations and the demand for flexible working arrangements have made use of communication technologies essential for remote communication, work, and new operational mechanisms. The rapid development of digital media platforms, driven by information and communication technologies, provides new communication forms for enhancing internal collaboration. While traditional methods like corporate publications, printed newsletters, suggestion/complaint boxes, and face-to-face meetings continue to exist, digital media platforms such as blogs, forums, and social networks used in personal lives are increasingly integrated into internal communication (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020: 6). Socially conscious organizations, in particular, adopt approaches based on employees' demographic, psychological, and behavioral characteristics to better communicate with employees, society, and customers, and utilize digital PR applications to fulfill their ethical and social responsibilities more effectively (Ruck & Men, 2021: 192).

3.1. Digital Public Relations Applications in Internal Communication

The development of digital PR applications is significantly influenced by the growth of the internet. The internet has profoundly impacted how people access information and communicate with others. It allows users to place and interact with various multimedia content, such as text, animations, graphics, audio, and video files. This development has not only enhanced global information processing, access, and storage but also enabled content and applications to be shared in a participatory culture by users (Hiremath & Kenchakkanavar, 2016: 707)

The internet and social media have increased the speed of information dissemination and news acquisition through instant and interactive communication opportunities, eliminating barriers to source control and feedback (Koçyiğit, 2017: 28; Çerçi, 2024: 107). This situation, where both organizational managers and employees are involved in information distribution, offers alternative ways for corporate communication to develop more openly, transparently, and controllably. In geographically dispersed organizations, the need for diverse internal communication channels is increasing. Having internal communication channels is vital for ensuring that messages are delivered accurately and timely, received by employees, understood, and evaluated for expected outcomes. Digital PR applications in internal communication facilitate effective communication between employees and management, real-time information sharing, and collaboration, thus supporting the strengthening of internal relationships.

In terms of internal PR, digital media technologies that encompass speech, gestures, behaviors, and all forms of social rituals reshape the presentation formats of traditional tools (Crowley & Heyer, 2019: 368). Generally categorized into written, verbal, and visual tools (Okay & Okay, 2014: 289), internal PR tools are not easily classified when it comes to digital PR. Traditional methods like letters are replaced by emails and text messages, meetings by online presentations, and events by virtual exhibitions and fairs. Suggestion/complaint boxes for gathering feedback are replaced by online surveys. Various digital applications, electronic document management systems, and social networks are used for sharing official or unofficial information and documents by organizational or departmental managers.

The digital PR tools/applications involved in establishing and maintaining communication networks between the organization and its employees can be categorized as follows:

3.1.1. Corporate Website

A corporate website is a web page specially designed to represent an organization's presence on the internet, announce information about the organization and its operations, and maintain communication with both internal and external target audiences. While corporate websites predominantly feature applications aimed at external communication, they also include lower levels of internal communication tools (Mert, 2019: 1522). These websites contain various content, from organizational news to promotional information about events, educational documents, and social responsibility practices. Sections accessible only to internal staff (IP-based or permission-based) are used for shared storage and information exchange. Corporate websites that are open to employees' individual and collective use can be considered as developing environments for informational, directional, and motivational purposes in corporate communication.

3.1.2. E-mail

E-mails are digital letters sent over the internet via specific service providers for communication and informational purposes. The ability to use e-mails quickly and individually, address specific individuals or groups directly, and receive feedback makes them an effective tool in internal communication (Okay & Okay, 2014: 299). E-mails, commonly used for messaging, announcements, and informational purposes, can include various types of files such as text, audio, images, and video. It is possible to receive information messages that the recipient has received the e-mail. Especially with the advancement of mobile communication technologies, e-mails have become a crucial communication tool for organizations, serving as an effective means for real-time communication. The integration of these digital PR tools into internal communication practices enhances interaction and collaboration among employees, contributing to a more connected and informed workplace environment.

3.1.3. Smartphones and Instant Messaging Applications

The advancement of communication technologies has accelerated the use of mobile devices, allowing internet access anytime and anywhere without spatial and temporal constraints (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020: 6). With the increasing number of individuals owning smartphones globally, the time spent using these devices is also rapidly rising[1]. Smartphones are considered primary tools for internet access, and many applications now

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[1]   https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-july-global-statshot

offer mobile versions. Smartphones are seen as a quick and effective way to communicate with employees without constraints of time and location.

Instant messaging refers to text-based communication where two or more people participate in real-time conversations via computers or mobile devices[2]. Applications like WhatsApp, Skype, Telegram, and Meta provide instant messaging capabilities, allowing wide-reaching access (Uzun & Uluçay, 2017: 221). For example, WhatsApp enables sending images, videos, voice messages, or documents via mobile phones or web-based platforms, and allows for voice or video calls and individual or group communication[3]. Instant messaging applications facilitate communication among team members in distant locations, enable the formation of virtual teams, and allow for information and file sharing. Through these applications, organizations can announce information about the institution, significant developments, promotions, awards, and celebration messages. Social media messaging applications can also share announcements, live event links, or survey links. By facilitating real-time communication, these platforms enhance participation and effectiveness in internal communication activities.

3.1.4. Electronic Document Management System (EDMS)

With an EDMS, official messages intended for employees are created and transmitted electronically over the internet. EDMS provides a secure environment for official correspondence, both within and between organizations, allowing for a standardized and rapid process. It offers easy access through mobile and web-based platforms, accelerating official communication channels and document management with electronic approval mechanisms. By enabling access without time and space constraints, EDMS supports official communication and document management with privacy and security measures through authorization-based use (Önaçan et al., 2012).

3.1.5. Intranet and Extranet

Intranet and extranet are network structures designed for the sharing, storage, and maintenance of internal information with only organizational stakeholders. An intranet is designed for internal communication and collaboration, while an extranet is intended for special communication and information sharing with specific organizations. Utilizing interactive communication technologies provided by the internet, intranet and extranet offer cost-effective and direct communication opportunities for organizati-

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[2]   https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/instant-messaging
[3]   https://www.whatsapp.com/

ons (Babacan & Ekiz, 2008: 263). Intranet, which is a limited network system where only the employees of the organization can access a lot of information about the organization by logging in through a certain system, supports the formation of corporate belonging as well as the flow of information within the organization, and enables the rapid realization of the transactions needed to solve problems (Mert, 2019: 1518).

3.1.6. Internal Publications

Periodic publications created to inform specific groups about organizational activities have long been used in internal PR (Arklan & Taşdemir, 2010: 172). Publications play a significant role in sharing information such as announcements, news, and promotions, helping to foster a sense of solidarity, unity, and closeness among employees (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 115). The shift to digital production of internal publications offers advantages such as reduced costs, easier distribution, and accessibility. Employees actively participating in the creation of digital publications like e-bulletins, e-brochures, e-newsletters, e-books, and annual reports can enhance their commitment to the organization. Publishing and sharing these materials on digital platforms facilitate employee recognition and adoption of the organization. Regularly distributing internal electronic publications and digital content for specific processes keep employees informed and addresses training and motivation needs. The accessibility of these digital contents at any time also ensures their availability for urgent and immediate use.

3.1.7. Video Conferencing Tools

Platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet are tools that enable real-time communication, collaboration, and file sharing through audio and video messaging. These tools facilitate meetings, training, seminars, and information sharing without time and location constraints, making communication and collaboration among individuals or groups easier and more personalized. Video conferencing tools are frequently used for current and necessary seminars, training, and updates. They offer remote work opportunities while supporting face-to-face communication and contributing to organizational efficiency. Additionally, they allow employees to participate in national or international meetings, training, and motivational webinars. Reaching employees at every level of the organizational hierarchy increases participation, fosters a sense of unity, and strengthens organizational culture. The advantages of digital platforms in reducing the cost of face-to-face communication make them appealing for use

in internal communication, especially in large-scale and multinational organizations (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020: 14).

3.1.8. Social Media Platforms

Personal communication still holds significant importance in internal communication. While new communication tools often address the limitations and barriers of older tools, some make them obsolete. Just as radio and television replaced books and newspapers in the 20th century, today's social media platforms are replacing traditional communication methods like lounge conversations and corridor chats (Crowley & Heyer, 2019: 368-369). Social media platforms stand out as social spaces for interaction between individuals and groups beyond ordinary communication tools. They offer features such as interaction, real-time engagement, and personalization, providing users with effective participation and interaction opportunities (Güzel, 2020: 97).

The process of information sharing, which ensures that employees can access needed information quickly, accurately, and easily, greatly impacts organizational success. Having information is not enough; it must also be shared with the target audience. Social networks that facilitate communication, collaboration, and information sharing offer significant advantages in conducting internal PR activities. Social media platforms, which have become an integral part of life, influence both personal and work life. In work environments where individuals cannot detach themselves from new media, including these platforms in internal communication should be seen as enhancing effectiveness and efficiency for both the organization and its employees. Advances in communication technologies and the increasing use of smartphones enable organizations to share any information related to themselves or their employees rapidly on corporate social media accounts (Okay & Okay, 2014: 300). Social media platforms, through effective and rapid messaging capabilities, contribute significantly to the work environment and are generally categorized into social networks, blogs, podcasts, forums, and video-sharing sites.

3.1.8.1. Internal Social Networks

Internal social networks facilitate interaction and the sharing of thoughts and emotions in a virtual environment, gradually becoming a more prominent part of individuals' lives (Güzel, 2020: 98). Programs like Yammer, Skype, and WhatsApp enable internal social networks within organizations, allowing employees to share information and interact more easily and quickly through closed groups. This fosters a more interactive

and streamlined internal communication process (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020: 6). Due to their positive effects on employee engagement, creativity, and advocacy, the use of social networks in internal PR activities is increasing (Lee & Li, 2020). While social networks, which can be customized according to individual wishes, can cause various trust problems in communication by building a virtual identity that does not reflect reality (Güzel, 2020: 99), they involve a lower risk in supervised use for corporate purposes. Internal social networks enhance communication among employees, strengthen collaboration, and accelerate internal information flow, offering tailored solutions through reliable accounts and mobile and web-based applications.

3.1.8.2. Blogs

Blogs, also known as weblogs, are web pages where individuals share their thoughts on various topics, and internet users can comment on these thoughts (Güzel, 2020: 99). Through blogs, individuals can disseminate their knowledge and experiences online to a wide audience. Internal blogs, created either individually or as groups within organizations are cost-effective, interactive, transparent, and feedback-oriented communication tools (Koçyiğit, 2017: 132). They can be used to enhance work efficiency and performance by replacing one-way email communication. Internal blogs are employed for communication, training, information sharing, project management, and developing creative ideas. The content of blogs used for creating organizational culture, enhancing information sharing, and promoting teamwork can be categorized by topic, person, and date, and easily archived (Sungur & Toksü, 2010). Additionally, regular monitoring of blogs by organizational leaders and PR experts can assess work related to corporate goals and track changing employee opinions. This information can be a valuable resource for evaluating internal communication and PR strategies.

3.1.8.3. Podcasts (Audio Blogs)

Podcasts allow the online distribution of digital content in the form of audio, video, or text (Güzel, 2020: 100). These digital audio and media products can be downloaded to computers and mobile devices from the internet, allowing them to be listened to while working or performing other tasks. Internal podcasts, specifically designed and distributed within organizations, offer an easy and accessible way to convey up-to-date information and messages to employees (Yazıcı, 2024). Unlike general podcasts, internal podcasts can be produced for specific target audiences and

situations, supporting the development and strengthening of corporate culture.

3.1.8.4. Forums

Forums are platforms for online discussions and debates on specific topics. As a variant of email, discussion forums allow registered users to discuss and exchange views on particular subjects. Participation in forums is typically not open to everyone. Forums usually have a hierarchical or tree-like structure, where a forum can be divided into multiple sub-forums, which can then be accessed for various topics. Users can respond to topics in designated areas and, in some forums, create new topics[4]. Forums have a database to record discussion topics, making it easy to access stored information when needed. Forums created for sharing information and experiences on specific topics facilitate collaboration among employees and support training and orientation processes within internal communication (Güzel, 2020: 100).

3.1.8.5. Video Sharing Sites

Various applications within social media platforms allow video sharing. Sites like YouTube and DailyMotion, where individuals and organizations can upload, watch, like, and comment on videos, are increasingly being used for corporate purposes as their educational significance grows. On YouTube, users can watch existing videos, comment, subscribe to updates, and upload their videos. This platform is utilized for sharing various activities and programs within corporate training (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020: 7). YouTube can be used to create a learning community, support employees with informative and educational videos, and function as a virtual library (Yıldırım & Özmen, 2012: 290). In addition to corporate goals, training videos or live broadcasts prepared with expert support in areas such as mentorship, foreign language learning, or technology use can enhance the internal communication system within the organization.

3.1.9. Internal Training Platforms

The internet is reshaping existing communication forms. Training enriched with multimedia content can be delivered online, and interactive applications can address employees' questions or requests in real time. The use of learning management systems and task/project management tools by organizations for training and communication purposes is increasing.

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[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_forum

3.1.9.1. Learning Management Systems

Learning Management Systems (LMS) are digital platforms that allow employees to receive training within the organization and monitor their progress. These systems are used for managing, documenting, presenting, tracking, reporting, and evaluating courses, training programs, and development programs, making them valuable for corporate training (Karaçalia et al., 2023). LMS platforms are employed by organizations not only for corporate purposes but also for conducting training activities tailored to employees' needs and interests. These systems provide access to training materials without time and location constraints and facilitate the collection of information on training, development status, and perceptions of courses for managers and administrators.

3.1.9.2. Task/Project Management Tools

These are applications created to enable employees to manage their corporate tasks more effectively with their team members. They are special software developed for team members to see the relationship between tasks, to perform their tasks on time and to keep things on track even when plans change. With this software, tasks can be placed on a timeline or calendar so that all processes are visible and can be followed by all team members. Tools like Asana, Trello, and Monday.com serve as significant communication aids, particularly in large organizations, by clarifying workflows and responsibilities and ensuring timely task completion.

3.1.10. Surveys and Feedback Applications

Surveys are used as data collection tools to help management understand information about the organization, its operations, and its employees. Organizations can conduct surveys to learn about their current status, and sources of employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and make necessary adjustments based on the collected data (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 122). With advancing technology, survey forms have been moved to digital platforms. Tools like Google Forms and SurveyMonkey facilitate the creation and administration of surveys, collecting feedback, and measurements. Survey links created on these platforms can be quickly distributed to the target audience via corporate websites, email, or social networks, and results can be obtained rapidly. The data collected provides valuable insights for evaluating the existing system and making strategic decisions.

4. Effects of Digital Public Relations Applications on Internal Communication

Digital public relations applications used for ensuring coordination, integrity, and continuity in internal communication offer various benefits while also presenting certain risks.

4.1. Contributions of Digital Public Relations to Internal Communication

Achieving corporate efficiency, quality, and integration through internal communication depends on using up-to-date, accessible, and effective communication methods suitable for the target audience and the message being conveyed (Arklan & Taşdemir, 2010: 73). The increasing impact of communication technologies on individuals' lives, along with the cost, access, and ease of use provided by digital public relations, plays a crucial role in internal communication (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020: 2).

Internal communication, which allows for reciprocal information flow, supports rapid and interactive communication to prevent potential mistrust, dissatisfaction, and misinformation (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 112). The integrity and cohesion required in internal public relations contribute not only to employee engagement but also to external public relations efforts (Arklan & Taşdemir, 2010: 32). The growing preference for digital public relations applications aids in maintaining continuous communication and information flow within the organization, ensuring timely feedback and accurate evaluation. As organizations increasingly digitalize, they leverage digital applications in public relations to enhance internal communication.

The contributions of digital public relations applications to internal communication can be summarized as follows (Arklan & Taşdemir, 2010; Aydede, 2009; Canöz & Canöz, 2020; Lee & Li, 2020; Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020; Akman, 2021; Einweller et al., 2021):

- Creating an effective communication network within the organization through instant communication applications.
- Providing transparent and open communication opportunities through structured communication channels and feedback mechanisms.
- Encouraging the use of internal social networks to create an environment where employees can freely express their opinions.
- Enhancing employee engagement and participation by improving the effectiveness of employee-organization relationships.

- Promoting individual-level communication and information sharing among employees through the structuring of informal communication channels.
- Increasing employees' knowledge and understanding of the organization and its goals through continuous, accurate, and real-time updates.
- Enabling organizations to quickly and effectively establish and maintain connections with different employee groups.
- Enhancing communication opportunities between managers and employees, as well as among employees themselves.
- Providing access to corporate information, documents, and records with authorized, multi-user, real-time speed and security.
- Coordinating, supervising, and tracking employees working on the same task or project.
- Monitoring employees' reactions within communication channels to track their attitudes towards the organization and work.
- Identifying and addressing conflicts and disagreements among employee groups before they escalate.
- Improving employees' knowledge and motivation levels through online meetings, seminars, and training.
- Developing customized communication platforms for the organization based on cost and security considerations.
- Offering managers alternative communication options to boost employee motivation and encourage collaboration.

4.2. Risks of Digital Public Relations in the Context of Internal Communication

The internet is reshaping existing communication forms. Online communication enriched with multimedia content and interactive applications strengthens internal communication. However, the communication tools used by employees and the communication conducted through these tools are not always controllable. As communication technologies advance, making communication easier, various overlooked aspects of their use pose significant risks for organizations. The risks associated with digital public relations applications in the context of internal communication can be summarized as follows:

- **Communication Barriers**: Continuous and intensive use of communication technologies can create barriers such as distraction from work, message overload and complexity, poor time manage-

ment, and differences in department and status (St. Amant, 2002: 211). In large organizations, the presence of a diverse range of employees and cultural groups with varying communication expectations can exacerbate these barriers.

- **Online risks**: Online social spaces come with technical, privacy, surveillance, content, and target audience-related risks (Sabri et al., 2023). Misinformation, negative content, or sensitive information can spread rapidly to a wide audience online. Misunderstandings or inappropriate comments about race or gender that can be quickly corrected in face-to-face communication may cause more significant issues online.
- **Misuse by extremists**: Social media platforms are vulnerable to misuse by extremists for a variety of reasons, ranging from spreading hate speech and propaganda to unauthorized sharing of corporate information for personal gain (Ganesh & Bright, 2020).
- **Privacy and security risks**: Online tools used in digital public relations carry numerous privacy and security risks concerning the protection of sensitive information (Sabri et al., 2023).
- **Impact on corporate culture**: If employees do not display a professional attitude on digital platforms, it can cause damage to the corporate culture and lead to major problems that can cause loss of corporate reputation (Koçyiğit, 2017).
- **Lack of expert support**: Practices carried out without the support of public relations experts in order to maintain in-house public relations activities in accordance with their purpose and to provide the expected benefit may cause irreversible loss of trust and reputation for the organization (Akman, 2021).
- **Lack of executive support**: The use of digital public relations applications that are not supported by top management and are disconnected from the organization's mission and vision can lead to negative situations or even crises for the organization (Arklan & Taşdemir, 2010).

Conclusion

The effectiveness of communication in informing employees and aligning them with organizational goals is significantly enhanced by new communication technologies. Strengthening internal communication is one of the ways to ensure effective corporate operations. The success of internal communication depends on the effective and efficient use of app-

ropriate tools. Leveraging digital public relations applications to accelerate communication processes, enhance message effectiveness, and gain employee support is crucial for internal communication success.

The support received from digital applications is increasing day by day in public relations activities carried out for different purposes such as getting to know employees and learning their demands, as well as corporate purposes such as informing, educating and guiding in internal communication. It is important to use digital public relations tools and applications correctly and competently to enhance the quality and efficiency of the communication process. Being aware of both the advantages and risks associated with digital public relations tools is essential for maintaining the effectiveness and efficiency of internal communication activities.

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INTERNAL DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

*Nazife KARAMAN**

Introduction

In today's world where it is impossible to stay away from the digital world, it is almost mandatory to follow and keep up with technological developments. Digitalization is present in every area of life, from education to health, from civil defense to economy. The progress made by the internet and communication technologies takes communication to very different dimensions. It also affects societies and makes social orientations possible.

Technological developments in the field of communication have also changed corporate communication strategies and methods. Since the 1980s, traditional media tools have been replaced by digital media tools. In recent years, technological determinism has changed every discipline, platform, sector, business and understanding. In the 2000s, digital change started to make itself felt more and more and every field had to adapt itself to the digital change and transformation process. Social media, which is at the center of communication today, has become the most effective communication tool of the 21st century and has displaced other communication tools. The basis of this revolutionary innovation is the realization of two-way communication faster, at lower costs and more consistently (Dilsiz, 2022, p. 5).

Internal public relations activities play an important role in maintaining the continuity of organizations. Digital public relations applications, which are used all over the world, are also used in internal public relations activities today. The impact of digitalization on internal public relations activities is mostly positive. Digital public relations provides fast, easy, interactive, economic and timeless interaction between the organization and its employees. It is needed to mention that the negative aspects of digitalization in internal public relations efforts, it can be said that it creates situations where face-to-face communication loses its impact, and real emotions

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can sometimes be concealed. The lack of a healthy digital infrastructure also leads to an unsafe communication environment and can create negative situations such the hacking of personal information or the breaking of firewalls.

In general, it is seen that digital internal public relations applications are actively used. It can be said that internal digital public relations will continue to be used as long as internet technology facilitates and contributes to public relations.

Internal Digital Public Relations

The importance of public relations has increased since the 1960s, when the global information society began to emerge. Along with the increase in mass media in these years, communication tools such as the internet, satellites, computers, and mobile phones have also made great contributions to public relations. The development of this technology has also brought about a social transformation and initiated a global information age. All these developments have also been reflected in public relations, and the digital technology used in the field has enabled the professional use of public relations (Kalender, 2013, p. 17).

Internal public relations is a part of the general public relations practice. While increasing productivity in the organization, it also aims to build trust by developing goodwill relations among internal employees and in the external environment of the organization. Increasing the productivity of employees within the organization does not only depend on high salaries or very good working conditions. According to studies, the productivity of the organization can also be increased by the implementation of certain programs and tools by the management of the organization. Therefore, internal public relations is the most important part of organizations (Kazancı, 2016, p. 333).

Internal public relations aims to establish a continuous and high quality communication by gathering employees in line with the goals of the organization and by sharing these goals with managers and employees. It is the duty of internal public relations to provide a healthy communication based on goodwill among the employees of the organization and to ensure its continuity. Increasing the efficiency of the organization depends on being successful in internal communication. Organizations that cannot ensure communication and harmony within themselves cannot be expected to be effective towards their external target audience. The organization must firstly maintain healthy communication with its own employees and senior

management. This successful communication contributes to the organization's achievement of its goals (Canöz & Canöz, 2020, p. 131).

Internal public relations activities are of great importance for the adoption of corporate culture. Internal communication is directly related to public relations strategies. A public relations system shaped by corporate culture has a significant impact on the establishment of corporate culture. Internal public relations activities are important especially in terms of strengthening the communication with the staff of the organization and creating a more positive working environment that will be reflected in the organization. Internal communication is the strategic communication activities carried out with managers and internal stakeholders that increase the loyalty and sense of belonging of the employees to the organization. The organization informs its employees about the organization, its goals and activities through its internal communication network. While the communication of organizations with their internal and external target audience and adaptation to developments are related to basic public relations applications, cooperation of the organization with its environment is closely related to contemporary public relations applications through social media (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020, p. 3).

With the widespread use of the internet and the development of digital platforms, there have been changes in the field of public relations. These digital developments have led to new public relations concepts called digital public relations, new public relations, P.R. 2.0 and E-PR. Although the internet and digital platforms have been effective in changing some aspects of public relations, they have not completely changed its basic elements. Digital public relations is an advantageous tool for today's public relations practitioners through internet technologies. While traditional public relations methods and mass communication channels continue to be used to send messages, digital public relations emphasizes two-way symmetric communication, which accelerates information sharing and feedback (Koçyiğit, 2017, pp. 61-62).

Thanks to the online usability of digital technologies, messages sent by professionals are actively perceived by users, new content is produced and reaches recipients more powerfully, effectively and quickly. Public relations activities carried out in online environments ensure the formation of a secure new value system. Messages given in a real, honest and transparent conversational atmosphere are more effective on recipients than messages created with a corporate attitude. In fact, message recipients feel that they contribute when they prefer these networks that include them in the

communication process. Thus, digital technologies are becoming more important for organizations every day (Sarıoğlu, 2019, p. 60).

In general, it is seen that traditional public relations applications continue. However, it is clear that internet technology brings convenience and new tools to public relations. In the field of public relations, the internet provides convenience in applications such as communication with the target audience at any desired place and time, establishing interaction and dialogue, management of crisis, image, reputation and brand, introducing the organization and providing information. Online applications have eliminated time constraints. Public relations practitioners can conduct efficient work for the organization by using internet technology strategically. Digital public relations offers more flexibility and transparency in interaction in a cost-effective and time-saving way (İmik Tanyıldızı, 2021, p. 36).

The digital environment, known as the online world, has also brought a new focus to public relations. Among digital public relations tools, especially social media platforms bring communities together and enable them to share their thoughts and ideas. People can communicate on almost any subject in online networks and share their thoughts and ideas with each other. The digital world has thus eliminated geographical distances and enabled people in different locations to meet at common points (Kım, 2016, p. 8).

Public relations practitioners are turning to new digital public relations. Digital public relations enables dialogic public relations activities. Interactive communication methods are preferred instead of traditional one-way, asymmetric communication models. Dialogic public relations is a practice that has global characteristics and is effective for strategic purposes. Public relations practitioners first used online media as a tool for digital public relations. Then they used websites to ensure the information flow. After websites, e-mails and social media tools started to be used in the digital field (Grunig, 2009, p. 7).

Digital public relations management requires restructuring traditional public relations. Especially in corporate strategies, digital innovations are needed in terms of corporate reputation management. Digital public relations applications have started to be used worldwide. Organizations prefer public relations experts who can fulfill the requirements of this digital age and use digital technology efficiently. Organizations using digital public relations applications make significant improvements in their market positions in their sectors. In the globalizing world, digital public relations is at the heart of creating and maintaining the image of organizations. Digital

public relations applications bring technical leadership to organizations (Herbert, 2005, p. 142).

With the internet, new communication technologies have been added to the traditional communication tools used in internal communication. The tools used in internal communication are divided into three as written, oral and electronic tools. With the use of the internet in every field, new communication technologies have also been included in internal communication tools (Danayiyen et al., 2017, p. 39). Organizational structure, working methods, manager and employee profiles change with the widespread use of digital tools in organizations. Digitalization in internal public relations brings a different dimension to organizational communication. Digital public relations, which started with web pages and e-mails, has developed internal public relations activities (Tekin, 2009, pp. 34-35).

The purpose of internal public relations activities is to motivate the employees of the organization to achieve its goals. Internal digital public relations is the most important factor in realizing this goal quickly and effectively. The tools to be used according to management style, corporate culture and organizational structure increase the impact. The interactive use of internal communication tools ensures efficient results. With the developing world order, time management, geographical distance and new economic order necessitate the progress of organizations. In the new world order, traditional internal communication and public relations methods are not sufficient. New communication tools and information technologies make the flow of news and information, as well as document exchange, faster and more effective. In addition, their contributions to corporate identity and culture sharing are more efficient (Danayiyen et al., 2017, pp. 39-40).

Internal Digital Public Relations Tools

Internet technology is the basis for institutions to carry out internal and external public relations activities. With the widespread use of the internet, there have been advances in internal communication and public relations activities. Internal digital public relations tools that have developed with digitalization are widely used. Websites, e-mails, intranet, blogs, social media accounts, digital video conferences, common document editing tools, RSS, wikis, microblogs and podcasts are among these tools (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020, pp. 6-7). This study focuses on websites, e-mails and social media tools that are widely used among digital public relations tools.

Websites

Businesses want to establish relationships with different target audiences and internal stakeholders and to obtain productive results. Obtaining positive results for the business from the relationship established with the environment directs the future activities of the business. The fact that businesses act in an open and transparent manner in both internal and external activities enables them to communicate more easily with their target audience. Corporate websites make a great contribution to this transparent management approach of businesses. Providing information about the business on the websites can create openness and transparency. Thus, an important step is taken to communicate with the internal and external target audience. For this reason, websites should include information that will enable the business to be recognized and to have positive impressions about the business. Businesses can present a lot of information on their websites such as the history of the business, the story of its establishment, the founders and managers, their resumes, the areas in which the business operates and the organization chart. In this way, the target audience is informed (Öztürk & Ayman, 2007, p. 58).

Public relations experts also use internal communication effectively in order for the organization to achieve its strategic goals. Internal public relations activities play an important role in organizations in terms of creating an effective corporate culture, ensuring coordination between units, solving problems, providing motivation and eliminating conflicts (Demir & Yıldırım, 2020, p.175). Websites are also frequently used tools in internal public relations activities. They are actively used for activities such as informing and introducing the organization's own employees. They are tools that enable the integration, interaction and reproduction of organizational cultures in the digital environment. Digital public relations activities, together with other applications, have a facilitating feature for integrated public relations communication and achieving strategic goals. Digital public relations has the features of accessibility to internal and external target audiences in a short time, effective use of complaint management, sharing developments and changes with the target audience and establishing healthy dialogue (Çakmak, 2017, p. 34). Individuals and employees who can interact with the organization through the website may make repeated visits and continue this communication in the future as a result of their satisfaction with the relationships and communication established via the website. Repeated visits to websites and maintaining relationships with the organization via the website indicate that the organization is successful

in using dialogic public relations from an organizational perspective (Boztepe, 2013, p. 94).

Corporate websites enable the use of different relationship-building strategies and tactics in internal public relations activities, as well as the creation and maintenance of relationships. Well-equipped websites that allow easy and fast access and include all kinds of information about the organization make it easier for the organization to promote itself, its goods and services in the international arena. Corporate websites are systems that allow an organization to easily implement data such as sound, movies, animations, graphics in any time zone with special files. Websites serve as an important public relations function by providing organizations with opportunities to distribute press releases for external audiences, to conduct research for target audiences and to disseminate corporate information (Boztepe, 2013, p. 94). For internal personnel, they are used to announce the policies of the organization, to inform and train the personnel of the organization on various issues, to promote the organization and to gain respect from the personnel. They are also used to make announcements about the personnel in the organization, to share special and important days and to provide information (Diker & Diker, 2022, p. 210).

Websites are also used in public relations activities for personnel candidates. Organizations use websites to advertise job vacancies and attract qualified candidates. Web-based advertisements often provide candidates with information on basic issues such as job vacancies, job descriptions, corporate culture, brand identity and incentives for employees. In job advertisements published on websites, organizations have the opportunity to introduce themselves and present their vision and mission statements. In internal public relations activities, online transactions and websites are used in all areas such as recruitment process, personnel training and performance evaluation (Öksüz, 2011, p. 274).

E-Mail

The first electronic mails that entered our lives with the internet have become one of the most important parts of public relations applications. An e-mail is a tool that allows messages sent to internet users from anywhere in the world in a very short time. It provides information access, sharing and interactive communication opportunities without time and space limitations. It is a tool that enables internet users to communicate electronically in sending messages to each other, in correspondence, in

informing, and in sending software and program files (Çakmak, 2017, p. 34).

The use of e-mail provides an interactive and fast communication environment such as sending, receiving, reading and responding to messages regardless of geographical distances. With e-mail, it is possible to make announcements to external target audiences, send newsletters to media organizations, and send internal correspondence and publications to internal staff (Dara, 2013, p. 67).

E-mail, one of the oldest features of the internet, allows individual users to connect with users in other networks, send messages and content, and share files and documents between networks connected to the internet. It has become a method frequently used by organizations to communicate with both internal and external target audiences over the internet. In public relations applications, e-mail is an effective tool used to establish, develop and maintain communication with the target audience (Tarhan, 2014, p. 67).

Organizational communication within an organization is the basis of internal public relations activities as information moves from the top unit to the bottom unit or vice versa through formal or informal channels. With the widespread use of technical facilities such as e-mail and electronic information and document management programs by organizations, internal public relations activities and organizational communication have become intertwined with information technologies. Therefore, e-mail management has become one of the most critical information management elements of organizations. Effective management of all resources containing information is provided by digital technology in organizations. All digital documents containing information are shared via e-mail, which allows the information stored in e-mails to be re-accessed whenever desired within the organization. Retrospective access to information saves time (Külcü, 2012, p. 228).

Social Media

One of the greatest innovations brought by internet technology is undoubtedly social media. The impact of the number of people connected to the internet in the world is felt in social media culture. The power of social media is not limited to the world of communication and marketing, but also affects public relations. As social media develops as a platform, the interest and participation of organizations in social media increases. Organizations actively use social media tools, especially because they are online

and interactive platforms. The organizations that have achieved the most success with social media campaigns have not only understood the process of a social media campaign, but have also integrated social media into the functioning of the entire organization (Kım, 2016, pp. 3-4).

Although social media is a media, it differs from traditional media in many ways. The fact that individuals can create, comment and contribute to social media content shows that social media has its own unique structure. Since text, audio, video and image sharing can be done in social media content, it offers a wide interactive network to its users. Thanks to social media, people are transformed from mere viewers and readers into actors who directly transmit information. By using social media tools, people have the opportunity to share their thoughts, ideas and experiences worldwide (Yağmurlu, 2011, p. 6).

Public relations applications and technological developments have developed in parallel with each other. For this reason, public relations and digital technology are closely associated. Following the rapid developments in internet technology, the emergence of YouTube and Facebook between 2004-2006 and Twitter in 2007 attracted the attention of public relations experts and academics (İmik Tanyıldızı, 2021, p. 64).

Social media tools are used in most public relations applications. Social media is a very effective channel for corporate communication, providing extraordinary access between the organization and the target audience. Social media is the most effective tool because it is interactive for internet users who are looking for information about the organization. There are various social media platforms such as blog, Twitter, LinkedIn that can be used in digital public relations management. The two most widely used social media platforms by public relations experts are Facebook and Twitter. They are followed by LinkedIn and YouTube (Kharisma & Kurniawan, 2018, p. 15).

Social media is increasingly used by companies, institutions and organizations. Social media, with its existing potential and new developments, offers positive opportunities especially for crisis communication practitioners. Today, organizations carry out their public relations activities through social media. They make evaluations about the organization itself through social media. They make growth and development criteria through social media. In addition, social media interactions are also measured to observe whether PR activities have achieved their goals (Wright & Hinson, 2017, p. 3).

With the development of social media used for communication purposes, brands and organizations have created a strategy by developing *social brand and social business* concepts. Organizations with a social brand strategy use social technologies to communicate. Social media used as a communication tool also affects the development and transformation of the organization's way of thinking. Social media is used not only for the external target audience but also for the internal target audience and for building bridges between employees and the organizations (Kim, 2016, p. 3-4).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Internal Digital Public Relations

The development of technology and the widespread use of mobile devices provide easy accessibility and the ability to process information at any time and any place. Information management in an organization is crucial as it helps implement the organization's transparency, responsibilities, uniqueness, openness, and communication efforts. The decisions taken in the organization and the policies of the organization are based on information. Accordingly, the process of processing the corporate culture develops thanks to information management. With the accelerated technological developments, the way of living, working, communicating, producing and consuming will undergo a different transformation (Çağlar & Akdağ, 2023, p. 5).

Traditional mass communication tools do not allow for a mutual interaction with the target audience, but digital public relations is an interactive process as it allows for mutual interaction and dialog. Organizations use technology, which provides effective and two-way communication, more actively to reach their internal and external audiences. Digital public relations applications have an advantageous position as they offer a fast, economically viable and effective communication network. They have also brought diversity to public relations applications. The fact that public relations activities carried out in the digital environment naturally enable two-way interaction has great advantages in terms of dialogic public relations (Öztürk, 2023, pp. 390-392).

Information management in organizations is important in terms of cultural difference, vision development, organization and strategy. Keeping pace with the rapid developments in terms of corporate strategy and actions is ensured by corporate information management. The lack of information management or unhealthy progress causes significant problems for the organization. The lack of an organization's information management system is a sign that the organization cannot achieve sustainable develop-

ment and competitive advantage. The strategic contribution of public relations to governance, sustainability and social responsibility is represented by structures related to the sustainability dimension of the normative framework for organizational strategy development (Çağlar & Akdağ, 2023, p. 5).

Since faster results are obtained from communications made via the internet, public relations experts also benefit from the advantage of using online media to communicate around the world. The fact that instant messages can reach more than one person has a positive impact on the work of public relations experts. It also facilitates the necessity of constantly following the updated information flow. The concept of digital public relations is no longer just one-sided and has become a continuous dialog with the target audience. Through digital public relations, supply and demand issues are resolved quickly. However, digital public relations does not always provide advantages and has some challenging points for public relations professionals. Due to the differences in target audiences and limitations in terms of time and interaction, organizations cannot deliver the messages they want to convey to all media platforms in the same way (Irak, 2021, p. 124-125).

The use of communication channels that employees are familiar with increases interaction in internal public relations activities. Messages from secure sources and the use of communication channels that employees trust develop a sense of trust in employees. Another purpose of social networks is to create this sense of trust in communities (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2020, p. 5).

Digital public relations activities have disadvantages as well as advantages. Although the disadvantages may not outweigh the advantages, they still have an impact on communication. Digital public relations offers a completely virtual environment of communication and eliminates face-to-face communication. In face-to-face communication, people can see each other's emotional expressions. While mutual interaction takes place face to face, people can understand what each other feels as people can see each other's facial expressions, gestures and movements (Çakmak, 2017, p.34). Social media tools can successfully be used in internal digital public relations applications in parallel with the relationship of internal personnel with social media. Digital public relations applications are in an advantageous or disadvantageous position depending on whether the personnel of the organization uses digital communication tools or not.

In corporate public relations activities and communication, digitalization has various advantages such as establishing relationships with the target audience, but it also has some disadvantages. These disadvantages are mostly related to the use of social media. The cultural differences caused by the spread of social media to very wide areas in the world and the different languages used around the world reveal differences in design and layout. In addition, fake social media accounts and security-related problems arise. In addition, it is necessary to consider whether the masses have access to media technologies due to the socioeconomic and geographical differences they experience (Irak, 2021, p. 124-125).

Conclusion

The function of internal public relations is to ensure that employees adopt the culture and values of the organization and increase their loyalty to the organization. In order to create a corporate culture, the needs of employees can be met by giving importance to internal public relations activities. For this reason, internal public relations activities are carried out to standardize the corporate culture. Internal public relations activities bring the organization and its employees together at a common point. Thus, organizations help to increase work efficiency by increasing the motivation of their employees. The employees feel a sense of belonging to their organizations and strive to fulfill their job responsibilities willingly (Yüksel et al., 2021, p. 164).

As a result of the increasing spread of digitalization, it is not possible for internal public relations to stay away from these innovations. It can be said that the fact that internal public relations activities follow this developing digitalization positively affects the interaction within the organization. It is obvious that the internal target audience is as important as the external target audience of organizations. It is possible for organizations to achieve success with well-managed public relations activities while moving towards a common goal with their internal target audience. The basis of this success is the employees' responsibility towards the organization, their sense of belonging and trust in the organization. It is possible for the organization to provide this safe interaction with its employees most easily through digital public relations.

Thanks to the developing communication technologies, organizations have started to use applications with electronic infrastructure today. The widespread use of computers and the internet facilitates internal public relations activities. The use of intranet and e-mail in internal communica-

tion facilitates instant connection and the transmission of messages in electronic environments. Since there are no time and space constraints, mobile devices have made it possible to use the internet anytime and anywhere. Another important development is social networks, which enable two-way communication via the internet. As a result of their widespread use, social networks have started to be used in in-house public relations activities and as an internal communication tool (Peltekoğlu, Askeroğlu, 2020, p. 6).

Internal digital public relations activities are implemented through different communication channels. The most commonly used ones are corporate websites, e-mails and social media networks. Especially in this period when social media tools are used intensively, organizations make effective use of social media applications to reach their employees and target audience. With the inclusion of artificial intelligence, one of the developing structures of digitalization, in the field of public relations, applications can reach different dimensions. By preventing digital technologies and digital communication from being conceptualized as a new medium of public relations only and evaluated on the basis of improving effectiveness from a managerial and functional perspective, studies aimed at developing digital public relations applications and using them more efficiently for organizations and their personnel will add significant richness to the field of in-house digital public relations.

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REAL-TIME DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INSTANT INTERACTION APPLICATIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

*Deniz Özer ALPER**

Introduction

Being "real-time" in the context of public relations requires responding to a situation within minutes, adapting to innovations in a short time, making regular and continuous communication and relationships, and protecting corporate values while doing so. It is possible for institutions to produce instant solutions to the feedback from their stakeholders, to develop and improve services with a real-time behavior. This is an opportunity for institutions to follow up customers and learn their expectations and problems. Today, reaching the target audience with traditional ways of advertising, marketing or public relations is no longer an advantage in itself. Being closer to the target audiences and listening to them has become much more important. Institutions have to rely on research, planning and teamwork to implement real-time communication. It is important for internal stakeholders to be responsible and take initiative, to act proactively for the decisions made and the steps taken. Employees in institutions with a real-time understanding have a sense of responsibility. They can provide real-time guidance to the consumer when necessary. This understanding is more difficult to realize in environments where authoritarian leaders are present. Because real-time communication does not develop in a control mindset. Initiative managers and employees should offer real-time guidance when needed.

Being real-time is the ability to instantly interact with audiences, and in real-time relationships, time is always now. As communication develops in real time, the consumer improves his/her sense of trust positively by receiving the right messages from the primary source. It is a strategy that focuses on responding quickly and timely to events such as breaking news, consumer movements, and current issues. The purpose of being real-time is to provide the consumer with access to the products, services and infor-

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mation they need "right now". The importance of real-time communication is increasing in shaping the opinions of the target groups about the institution, as it will affect their decisions according to the reactions of the institution in their perceptions of the institution. In this context, while public relations provide effective communication based on trust within its target audiences, this relationship is further strengthened by its real-time nature. Rather than making sales to real-time public relations consumers, it focuses on an understanding that builds and sustains corporate commitment, corporate image, and reputation. At this point, in addition to the real-time marketing approach, it includes a follow-up process to increase corporate visibility, to enable target audiences to speak positively about the institution and to understand what is being talked about the institution, to respond to problems and requests instantly.

It is imperative that institutions develop communication and relationships with their target audiences, and this is the job of public relations. Through social media, public relations is an effective tool for building and maintaining trust in the institution and its services. For this reason, it is not possible for public relations to stay away from digital communication technologies and especially social media tools. It is important that the two are harmonious and integrated. Institutions use digital media messages to inform the public. For example, if the power is to be cut, they send an information message in advance. They ask for feedback through appointment time reminder messages, surveys asking about purchase satisfaction within a few minutes of shopping, or messages asking consumers for their opinions, suggestions, complaints, and expectations about products and services.

In the digital age, the important thing is speed and making the right breakthroughs first. In the digital environment where market boundaries are uncertain, many competitors are trying to adapt to the new, but also developing system, and institutions that can communicate in real time manage to be at the forefront. Sharing last-minute information in real-time process management is managed more effectively in the digital network and especially in social media. In the management process, adapting to the digital environment, attracting attention, creating consensus, and problem solving have become faster and more effective. In the nature of social media, real-time interactions have to proceed in a conscious and measured way. For this reason, the real-time and customer-oriented understanding of institutions on social media requires a strategic and tactical approach.

There are also people who talk about the institution on social media and are not on the institution's radar. It is also important to be in the environments of these unknown groups and follow their posts. Entering into a dialogue with people prevents the illusion of uniformity about the institution. Institutions that have come to the importance of communicating with existing customers in real time work by responding both quickly and personally. They also create the stories that customers will tell about the institution in their own digital environment. In addition to increasing corporate value in the eyes of the consumer, courtesy behaviors, fast response time, and the effort to please the customer on social media give the consumer strong reasons to share these experiences. Mobile devices are the fastest growing and most effective in creating real-time stakeholder engagement. It is also necessary to create a technological infrastructure to support real-time work. In this context, the aim of this section is to evaluate the reflections of real-time public relations practices on social media from the perspective of institutions and stakeholders.

How Has Social Media Changed Public Relations?

Public relations aim to influence perceptions with modern corporate communication methods. When Edward Bernays proposed in 1952 (2012: 3) that public relations had three meanings, he did not yet have the present day of communication technologies; but he drew attention to the importance of the same public relations that are necessary for the well-being of individuals, groups and institutions and that help them to adapt to modern society. Bernays explained what public relations is as (1) informing the public, (2) persuading them to change attitudes and behaviors, (3) efforts to integrate the mutual attitudes and actions of the institution and the public. These efforts of public relations are happening more effectively and faster today through new media tools. Furthermore, institutions have begun to implement public relations practices on social media to reach niche audiences. While it has become easier to produce content on social media, it has also reduced costs.

Since every person from the baby boomer generation to the present day is a member of at least one social media network, there is no doubt that the new way of word of mouth marketing is social media marketing. The need for social media marketing has emerged as it plays an important role in keeping the products, services and corporate promotions of institutions in mind, connecting with target audiences and, most importantly, in the information flow of target audiences. Yet that's the job of public relations.

For this reason, both public relations and social media have to be aligned with social media to build trust in their institutions and services. In many ways, the impact of social media on public relations is evident (Bates, csic.georgetown.edu):

- Public relations and social media are based on communication, but with real-time messaging, social media empowers messages, making public relations stronger and more effective.
- Content published through newsletters, emails and other PR-related tools can be available for longer, spread faster and be more lasting with the help of social media.
- Social media has enabled public relations to reach a much wider audience. Previously, public relations targeted specific individuals, such as investors and business partners, but social media caused this target group to expand to include all stakeholders important to the success of an institution.
- Social media has made public relations closer to all stakeholders of a business, and a field called relationship marketing has emerged. This has helped institutions to be closer and more accessible to their target audiences.

The digital world requires more attention and communication skills in terms of public relations, but it also opens up many opportunities. Public relations are shaping the methods of creating and disseminating information in this rapidly developing and changing new world. Responding to the demands of target audiences, keeping up-to-date, and adapting to the digital media in terms of sharing corporate information are now of great importance for institutions. For this reason, it is necessary to be open to this development and to produce new and effective campaigns and content for this medium. Institutions should now be able to adapt and use new communication channels. The digital age is changing the demands on public relations practitioners and the way they do their jobs.

The media is divided into many communication channels. In this complex structure, it has become more critical to develop a positive image, compete and communicate. Therefore, it has become much more difficult to keep the interest of the masses alive in this network. Nowadays, many institutions have started to use digital communications as well as traditional public relations tools to reach their target audiences, communicate with customers and expand their audiences. Priority public relations tools

such as e-mail, websites, digital newsletters, blogs, search engines, RSS, podcasts, social media have come to the fore.

The development and increase of social media channels have made existing practices more effective. These new trends have led to a redefinition of existing jobs. It also offered a great opportunity to reach current and potential target audiences. The speed and influence of social media also required public relations practitioners to be more equipped and skilled. Planning and monitoring the traditional process is a more comfortable way to carry out public relations practices, expected and planned achievements are realized. In addition to all these features, it has also brought risks. The biggest risks arise when institutions ignore social media and what happens on social media. Since reacting in real time requires quick thinking and taking risks, turning risks into opportunities means managing a more dynamic and careful process (Scott, 2011: 63). In the face of new opportunities and challenges, social media has enabled real-time interaction. The fact that there is a two-way real-time communication without communication time limit and that everyone has become a citizen journalist who produces news about institutions and their activities, and enables them to speak has included a new one in public relations practices on social media. Thus, public relations and social media have formed an inseparable whole. In obtaining information and spreading the news, people first turn to the social media accounts of institutions. Therefore, leaving these very active and crowded areas unattended is a behavior to the disadvantage of the institutions.

Social media has become the center of almost all communication, providing real-time access and reaching millions. Social media has become a natural extension of the world of communication. What makes these communication and sharing platforms so popular is their real-time nature. Now, almost all the institutions have had to manage their corporate social media accounts professionally.

Social media is a powerful tool that everyone can use. It enables formal or personal interaction. Social media is used not only to search for information, but also to build an effective visibility and create relations with society. It is necessary to integrate any new means of communication into all the work done. It has become the primary tool used to inform target audiences, build trust, create reasons for consumers to buy and motivate them. While benefiting from their existing skills, institutions will be able to see new opportunities on social media based on their strengths and thus adapt to change. This behavior provides foresight to institutions, enabling

them to anticipate potential threats and mitigate the risks of these changes. Three basic skills are required for this: perception, ownership, and restructuring. These three concepts facilitate the adaptation of institutions to change and their integration into new professional planning practices (Charest et al. 2016: 530). Ertzcheid, Faverial and Gueguen (2010) (cited in Charest et al. 2016: 531) propose a three-step strategic social media model that combines people's needs for trust, commitment, cooperation:

1- Developing the trust capital of the institution by working on its identity and reputation through transparency and active listening.
2- Developing a sense of commitment and transparency in order to reveal corporate ambassadors whose numbers increase over time in order to disseminate the ideas of the institution.
3- Developing the community around a common project based on the nature and goals of the institution (for example, associating the institution with a social purpose), aiming at the co-creation of content, promoting a specific lifestyle.

The long-term success of institutions is affected by the effective use of communication processes in an integrated manner. Digital media is inexpensive to use for institutions, provides instant international communication, and expands its field by supporting traditional media. Social media has now turned into an effective area where the target audience can actively share which goes beyond creating a web page. This area creates awareness and relationship building and becomes an arena that cannot be ignored and holds power.

Young (2008) (cited in Papasolomou & Melanthion, 2012: 322) emphasize that relationships established through social networks, as well as through all other relationships, take time to show their value, and therefore institutions must adhere to the social media management process in order to achieve these benefits. From this point of view, it can be assumed that communication technologies contribute to the development of institutions, and the interactive and dialogic feature of this digital environment has been adopted by institutions in a short time. The fact that social media is fast, inexpensive and interactive increases the importance of this interest.

Valentini (2015: 171) underlines that an evaluation should be made on three basic questions in order to question whether social media really provides concrete benefits to the public relations profession, institutions and target audiences.

1- What is the perceived value of social media for public relations?
2- What are the alleged benefits of social media for the public and organizations?
3- What are the possible effects of the current use of social media for public relations?

The driving force behind the popularity of social media is the way society consumes news and information. This affects why and how institutions use social media. In order to communicate effectively, institutions should go where the target audiences position themselves. The biggest risk is to ignore social media and allow conversations to take place without awareness or participation (Distaso et al. 2011: 326).

The intensive use of social media in organizations has also revived interest in stakeholder management. Digital platforms make it easier for institutions to identify their customers, analyze their needs and behaviors, create contents of value, and establish emotional bonds, thus increasing loyalty, satisfaction, and positive perception of the institution (Navarro et al. 2017: 702).

In their study investigating the importance of being transparent in the media, Distaso and Bortree (2012: 513) emphasize that social media is used to inform people about what the institution does and why, and to provide useful information for others to make informed decisions. Institutions gain transparency by communicating. This is much more possible with social media today.

As an institutional requirement, digital public relations leave a mark on the internet, provide information about the institution on the internet, obtain information about products and services, and enable interactive communication and interaction (Koçyiğit, 2017: 70). The impact and power of social media, its ability to transform target audiences into socialized masses, its shift of control to both organizations and users, the rapid sharing of content and the power to shape public opinion, and its facilitation of effective two-way communication have all accelerated the use of social media for public relations purposes (Alikılıç, 2011: xi). All these features also give public relations the ability to be real-time and to communicate simultaneously, transparently and reliably with stakeholders.

What is Real-Time Public Relations?
Developments in communication technologies have changed the nature of long-distance communication and created the opportunity for mutual and simultaneous communication between continents. In the last years of

the twentieth century, high-speed internet, mobile phones and smart devices have revolutionized real-time communication and created many communication opportunities such as instant messaging. Today, this infrastructure has added new dimensions to public relations in new markets (Yavuz & Tarhan, 2022: 980) as a result of the meanings attributed to marketing methods, the differentiation of similar products from each other and the efforts made to purchase them.

In the age of communication, where communication channels are multiplying and continuing to increase, people are exposed to countless messages by many institutions. Institutions have begun to develop behaviors that will reveal their differences in order to attract people's attention and influence them. Among these, reacting to developments and events in real time emerges as an important competitive advantage that requires being fast and aggressive, and affects the result. The real-time relationship of the institutions with the target audience is revealed as real-time marketing, real-time product development, real-time communication and real-time customer service (Scott, 2011: 34). The understanding of being real-time is the dissemination of messages that are related to a trending topic on the agenda and published at the same time (Kerns, 2014: 16). The message is prepared by establishing a connection with the subject and it is aimed to attract attention. Institutions can communicate their brands/identities to wider audiences at no cost. Public relations have become more important in real time. Listening, reacting to the target audiences and staying active have become a part of corporate reputation management (Macy & Thompson, 2011: 123). Research shows that real-time behavior can be possible by being active and effective in social networks and by linking activities to corporate goals (Heresi & Arbaize, 2023: 74). It is stated that the attitudes of the target groups towards real-time behaviors are positive (Sadedil, 2022: 444). It has been revealed that strengthening social relations and listening to the demands of the target audience affect the corporate image (Sunaryo et al. 2023: 406).

Real-time communication/public relations covers the communication process in which institutions can establish direct and simultaneous connections with their target audiences. Real-time communication takes place in two ways, half-duplex and full-duplex (Yasar & Irel, https://www. techtarget.com):

- Half-duplex real-time communication: asynchronous communication where the communication can be on a single carrier and in

both directions, but not simultaneously. Email, voicemail, etc. are such communications as asynchronous or time-spanning. There is a delay between the transmission and receipt of the information.

- Full-duplex real-time communication: There is a simultaneous and both-way message flow on a single carrier in communication. Communication via tools such as direct messaging, online customer service, and telephone through social media accounts is carried out simultaneously.

Real-time communication/public relations has provided a significant competitive advantage for institutions and their brands. Real-time public relations practice is an interactive monitoring and improvement performance. Institutions are remembered for their successful campaigns and feedback. These posts also provide sympathetic support to institutions.

Real-time public relations are of great importance, especially in times of crisis. One of the most important features of crisis periods is to provide fast, transparent and explanatory information, and this is the period when real time needs to be taken into account the most. Managing such a risky process effectively strengthens corporate reputation. Rees (2020: 121), in his research on the effects of digital media on corporate reputation management, revealed that real-time interaction is one of the important factors that increase the impact on the success of institutions. In the study, seven factors were determined in order for institutions and their brands to remain original. These are compliance, behavior, integrity, value, corporate social responsibility, real-time communication, and customer.

Compliance refers to the need for institutions to monitor people's understanding of their changing values and their adaptation to these values. Digital media makes this much easier and offers an area of research. The target audience is constantly listened to and monitored through social media. Failure to adapt to changes may lead to losses for institutions at a time when expectations increase. Behavior refers to how the institution behaves according to its values. An institution is remembered for its actions and behaviors. The most important aspect of corporate communication is action. Integrity, institutional behaviors require that every verbal, written, audiovisual message be consistent and complete. It is also important that all messages are consistent with institutional behavior. All the shares of the institutions affect the choices of the target groups. Value is an understanding that can be acquired and developed. Values are based on an honest and open communication basis of institutions. Social media is a serious

threat to dishonest institutions that do not keep their word as a medium where facts are shared and spread very quickly. Institutions should adopt a management approach that focuses on adding value to communities, not just profit. There is now an understanding that corporate social responsibility should be embedded in corporate culture and philosophy rather than seen as a strategy or project of institutions. Corporate social responsibility should be linked to values. Real-time communication is that they are constantly interacting with their target audience and actively responding to their requests and questions in order to meet the need for rapid response. In particular, the impressive nature of social media provides great advantages to institutions in terms of real-time communication without time and space limits. The customer is the most important stakeholder that the institution has to interact with. Today, positive or negative content about the institution can be shared quickly on social media. This affects how customers think about the institution. Customers now have more power than the institution and can act as defenders or opponents of the institution when necessary.

Real-time communication has moved practitioners towards a model of excellence by moving public relations beyond defining them as "as before, but faster" (Sheldrake, 2012: 147). The essence of real-time public relations requires meticulous, effective communication and training in this process more clearly and visibly. By creating a social media policy to manage public relations in the digital age, new media alternatives have become important in addition to traditional media. This has been adopted as the unchanging principles of the new marketing principles in terms of adapting to a changing environment over time. It has become important to be as close as possible to people's lives, to be closely interested in the needs of target audiences, changing lives and thoughts, to create a compromising environment by making the target audience the center of activities, and to ensure the active participation of the target audience. Here, we can talk about real-time interaction as the strongest category due to developments in digital media. The fact that the institution develops an effective conversation and is open to it will be the primary source from which direct information about the institution can be obtained, thus preventing rumors and hearsays. This means preventing or mitigating a possible crisis. This shows the potential power of real-time communication. The aim here is to increase participation in social media, to increase content sharing, to create an impression about the institution/brand, and to generate income (Kerns, 2014: 174).

There are fifteen factors put forward for the real-time interaction of institutions to be successful. These are (Rees, 2020: 129);

1. Being original through words as well as visuals
2. Using the right tone and language for the brand online
3. Being honest, open and transparent
4. Ensuring that promotions are brand compliant
5. Being interactive instead of pushing promotions
6. Providing information
7. Turning customers into defenders
8. Generating content to share
9. Responding personally to ideas and suggestions
10. Responding instantly
11. Being sensitive to the environment
12. Constant monitoring
13. Listen to stakeholders (don't just tell)
14. Being different
15. Creating emotion and excitement

Establishing real-time communication provides institutions with the ease of following the developments in digital media, adapts to the changing environment and time, builds trust in target audiences, establishes more transparent communication, and spreads information from the primary source instead of answers from unknown sources about questions and issues.

Social media gives institutions much more room to grow. While encouraging the participation of target audiences, it also increases their expectations. This situation requires institutions to be more careful on social media. With real-time communication, institutions have the opportunity to collect more data about consumer thoughts and the market. Following social media and the target audience, knowing how many people view the content, and what is talked about the institution allows institutions to make a deep analysis.

There is no right time for real-time marketing. Institutions must be ready at any time. Social media has become part of the usual workflows of institutions. For this, five reasons are put forward for each institution and the people representing it to be interested in real-time public relations (www.presspage.com):

1. The field of public relations practitioner has spread to the digital platform, which is much faster.

2. It is not enough to just inform. Public relations should be involved quickly and actively, not only through text but also visually compelling with videos.

3. With real-time public relations, new tools for real-time monitoring and tracking trends are becoming fast, available, and inexpensive.

4. The fact that not only SEOs but also all corporate employees represent the institution in a public area contributes positively to corporate reputation.

5. Real-time public relations are also essential in times of crisis and therefore direct communication is established with more reliable, clear information in communication.

Public relations practitioners were also performing a version of being real-time in traditional media, but in the process of producing and disseminating news, social media is faster in terms of time than traditional media. Being real-time has revealed the communication process that connects with current events in order to bring the target audience together with the institution. The association of the institution's products with events also includes real-time marketing. Social media offers the opportunity for institutions to reach large audiences quickly and at low cost by taking advantage of the interest of the target audience on a subject. Being real-time provides a dynamic interaction to the target audiences, makes it easier to actively listen to the target audience, to carry out the largest market research applications, and uses technology by creating unity. It is not enough to just know what the target audience thinks about the institution and its products/services. At the same time, he/she should be able to be compatible with them, stay in active communication and adapt to the things that people care about. This affects how the institution looks.

Buhalis and Sinarta (2019: 579) emphasize that a value is created together with target audiences on more than one platform according to the results of the research in which they reveal that creating a real-time partnership and instant communication constitute an innovative approach. Interactions are made in real time, voluntarily. This adds value to institutions and their products/services. It provides information to institutions about target audiences. Personalized services are offered and restructured against the changing demands. Institutions are dynamically involved in the real-time communication process and increase their performance effectiveness and efficiency through timely actions and behaviors.

How to Do Real-Time Public Relations on Social Media?

It has turned into an information dissemination platform where social media communication flow is used most intensively. The fact that institutions behave in real time has led them to adopt a dynamic approach. This dynamism is successful in social media if institutions communicate directly with the target groups and reach them when they need and are interested. Tracking in real-time communication and activities with the right people/groups and with the right messages at the right place at the right time is a necessary condition for this success. With the revolutionary change in computer and communication technologies, a new measure of success has emerged for institutions. It is the ability to collect, interpret and react to new information in real time in less than seconds, and those who are aware of this ability put institutions forward (Scott, 2011: 11). Scott (2011) describes the ways to follow in the book, in which he describes the rules of real-time marketing and public relations. The conditions of the real-time approach mentioned by Scott in the book are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Compiled from David M. Scott's book Real-Time Marketing and Public Relations

Condition	Status
Being fast and swift	Acting quickly in posts and feedback
Creativity	Generating creative content,
Taking part in social media	Using social media tools effectively
Reacting to current news	Explaining and sharing about current events, crises, social problems
Adapting to change	Taking part in current practices and new channels
Building a social media team	Creating a team that will manage social media accounts, make posts, evaluate comments, and answer and solve questions
Establishing media relations	Making the press rooms, press releases, news in the press, hashtags, blog, website in real time
Using it as a crisis communication tool	Announcement of breaking news in uncertain situations, during periods of crisis
Getting ideas from the target audience	Using questionnaires for opinions, suggestions, requests, creative ideas
Real-time communication with customers	Replying to emails, talking on social media, opening online chat rooms
Real-time service	Providing convenience in payment, marketing, presentations
Real-time training	Offering training programs to both employees and target groups

These conditions of being real-time are based on how to establish communication, producing content, sending the right content to the right audiences at the right time and making instant decisions, and mostly have a time-oriented understanding (Akbarpour et al. 2020: 347). Being successful in the face of news, events or crises with the ability to react quickly is possible by developing clear, honest, sensitive and effective communication. Social media platforms play a central participatory role in this sense. These platforms are important for monitoring and analyzing public feedback, changes, reactions, and are essential elements to consider when creating and implementing strategies such as communication, marketing, advertising. At the same time, reacting to consumers, social and cultural events and problems immediately shows the sensitivity of the institution to its environment. Thus, institutions that realize the seriousness of innovations brought by new technologies can manage the flow of communication in real-time environment.

Real-Time Public Relations Practices on Social Media

Real-time public relations applications have gained an important dimension with the spread of digital technologies and social media. When these practices are used correctly, they ensure that institutions are in effective and continuous communication with their target audiences. Fast and instant information sharing is carried out with a dynamic content management. Being fast and aggressive is one of the first conditions to be in real time, and this approach has become more effective with social media. It also ensures that other elements are successful.

Social media platforms are used to support real-time public relations and communication strategies. What is important for institutions is that each platform determines the appropriate strategies according to its own characteristics and the usage habits of the target audiences. Social media platforms, especially Twitter (X), Instagram and Facebook, were examined and some of the real-time public relations and communication examples are listed as follows according to their characteristics.

Campaign live broadcasts: Real-time interaction is provided by organizing live broadcasts on social media accounts for events, product promotions, important announcements, trainings, interviews. In this way, followers can be interacted with through live broadcast and questions can be answered.

Hashtag campaigns: The interaction is increased by organizing hashtag campaigns for events or promotions. Through this hashtag, target audiences communicate, share content and participate in the campaign.

Q&A sessions; Institutions, brands, influencers or well-known people organize real-time Q&A sessions to answer followers' questions and increase interaction.

Story shares: Instagram stories are published for a limited time for a day, allowing them to interact directly with their followers and share real-time content.

Advertising campaigns: Brands reach their target audiences by organizing real-time advertising campaigns. These contents can include ads directed to specific audiences and optimize the campaign by tracking real-time feedback. Real-time advertising campaigns are organized with advertising platforms such as Facebook and Instagram Twitter Ads.

Interaction with trends: Interaction is increased by responding quickly to current events and trends. Interaction can be increased by giving a humorous or relevant answer to a current issue.

Event live broadcasts: Live broadcasts are organized during current trends and events and real-time interaction is made with the followers. Rapid reactions reach large masses in a shorter time. Event details are shared and followers are encouraged to participate in the event.

Tweet feed and instant news: Instant news updates and tweet feeds and informational messages are published. It can be an effective way to provide information quickly, especially when there are important events.

Product/service launches: Interactions can be made by organizing real-time product/service launches. Product/service promotions can be made with live broadcasts or stories and followers' questions can be answered.

Interaction with user content: Brands can respond in real time to the content that their followers share their products and experiences. They can share the content produced by the followers on the official accounts of the brand. In addition to increasing brand loyalty and bonding, it is also an important way to create word-of-mouth communication on social media.

Groups and communities: Brands and institutions create groups and communities on social media and inform their followers about the activities. Event details, programs, participants and important information can be shared. Followers are brought together on a specific topic and interaction is increased. Collaboration is encouraged.

Instant messaging and customer service: Social media is used effectively to write and send messages, mutual conversation, to share problems,

requests and information, to listen to complaints and increase customer satisfaction in general. Real-time communication is established with the followers through DM. Instant customer feedback lines provide the opportunity to make the necessary improvements by ensuring that problems are resolved quickly.

Editing surveys: Surveys shared on social media provide real-time feedback on getting the opinions of target audiences. It can be especially effective in the product development process or when determining content strategies.

Games: Organizing games and competitions that offer rewards and discounts to increase follower participation can be effective in gaining followers and re-visiting, as well as real-time communication. These creative, fun and interactive experiences allow followers to interact with the organization/brand and offer experiences for product promotions.

Influencer collaborations and brand ambassadors: Brand/corporate awareness is increased by collaborating with influencers. Real-time content sharing with influencers and reaching followers, organizing common live broadcasts and increasing interaction are important platforms.

Crisis management: It is effective in reacting and communicating quickly in social media crisis situations, transmitting the right information about the subject from the primary source, preventing speculation, relieving the concerns of the target audiences, and answering questions.

Multi-platform integration: Multi-platform integration is provided by combining different social media platforms, it offers the advantages of broadcasting live at the same time and reaching large audiences, and combining interactions on different platforms.

Feedback analytics and data monitoring: In addition to interacting with target audiences in real time, tracking real-time feedback and follow-ups, follower interactions, shares, comments and emotion analysis are monitored using social media analysis tools, and faster strategies are determined or improved accordingly.

Location-based advertising: Participation in real-time events and engagement is increased by using location tags. Using location-based advertising strategies, information messages are sent to target audiences about events and campaigns in close proximity and participation is encouraged.

Social responsibility and community participation: Organizing activities and campaigns to raise awareness on issues that concern society such as the environment, society, education, health, culture, creating voluntary

activities to encourage participation, instantly sharing them on social media and spreading them to large masses.

Mobile application: Social media integration with mobile applications can enable followers to be informed about brands / institutions / activities with push notifications and instant updates.

Online trainings and seminars: It provides convenience in organizing online trainings and seminars on social media platforms, informing target audiences about expert opinions, answering participants' questions and preparing interactive sessions.

Storytelling: Storytelling that emphasizes the value of the brand and the institution, customer stories, success stories, real-life stories are effective real-time content in creating an image and strengthening identity.

These activities and practices keep the real-time behaviors of the institutions active and the direction of following the agenda as well as ensuring that they are on the agenda. The following apps are considered examples of real-time public relations efforts on the X (Twitter) social media app.

Example 1: Migros Turkey and Migros Service X Application

Source: https://x.com/Migros_Turkiye

The Migros Turkey account includes content such as the brand's new products and services, national values such as April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day, commemorative contents for the anniversary of the February 6 earthquake, condolences about martyr news that negatively affects the country's agenda, and social responsibility projects. These posts contain up-to-date content about their product/service promotions that

will keep the institution on the agenda; in addition, they show the current reaction behavior against the events/situations/events on the agenda.

Source: https://x.com/MigrosHizmet

Migros has a corporate X (Twitter) (@Migros_Turkiye) account, as well as a Migros Service X (@MigrosHizmet) corporate account where he provides customer service. Migros Service application is used as a social listening area where the institution responds directly to the problems, demands and suggestions of its customers. The fact that customers share the problems they face instantly in this area and the organization responds instantly and quickly to solve these problems is an indicator of real-time public relations behavior.

According to the above-mentioned features of the real-time public relations approach, the applications of Migros' X accounts are fast and swift in responding to follower posts, actively using social media, producing creative content, sharing about current events and reacting to current events/problems, adapting to change by using the features of social media, sharing content such as hashtags, press releases, news in the press on social media and conducting media relations in real time, using announcements informing the public about negative content about the institution as a crisis communication tool by using a social media account, and communicating with followers in real time by giving fast and solution-oriented responses to their posts can be mentioned as an indicator of real-time service approaches.

Example 2: THY and TK HelpDesk

Since Turkish Airlines is an international brand and one of the best airlines in the world, it has both Turkish and English X accounts. In both

accounts, as in the case of the Migros brand, the activities sponsored by the company through the corporate account, social responsibility studies, current and new flight information, artistic activities, special day shares were made simultaneously.

Source: https://x.com/TK_TR

Another corporate account of Turkish Airlines is @TK_HelpDesk. Membership card information of thy followers and thy customers in this field, their current status regarding travels, situations that customers

should pay attention to during their journeys, flight rights owned by customers, innovations made, changes in flight schedules, solutions and information about problems related to the institution are carried out through this field. At the same time, solution suggestions are offered through this account where followers share their problems.

Source: https://x.com/TK_HelpDesk

The active and up-to-date use of social media accounts by Turkish Airlines shows that the institution cares about real-time behavior. Updating content and applications, providing convenience by focusing on customer experiences, supporting social responsibility campaigns and current events, focusing on finding solutions to customer problems from every social media account help the institution maintain its competitiveness in the digital age, as well as exhibiting a strong real-time public relations management by effectively using social media platforms.

Example 3: Oreo and Super Bowl Power Cut

One of the important social media strategies of brands is the posts they make on topics that attract the attention of the public. The understanding of being real-time, which focuses on customer feedback and current situations to create real-time interactions with the target audience, ensures both the brand/institution's desire to communicate and the increase in participation to gain followers. It is possible to make this approach planned and effective from a strategic point of view.

As an X (Twitter) strategy, Oreo shared a post on X based on the power outage during the Super Bowl in 2013. Using the power outage during the game, Oreo posted "Power out? No problem. You can still dunk in the dark". This interaction of Oreo attracted quite a lot of attention and was shared by thousands of people. Target audience reach was increased with this interaction provided by the brand completely free of charge.

Source: https://mediacat.com/super-bowldaki-elektrik-kesintisini-firsat-bilen-oreo-oldu/

An important factor behind this success of the brand is that "all decisions are taken simultaneously and the creative team is ready in front of the computer during the match" announced by the agency it works with. Such readiness indicates that real-time behavior can emerge quickly, swiftly, and creatively. This content, which was created only ten minutes after the power outage, produced more than 12,000 retweets in the next 20 minutes and reached 16,000 at the end of the game.

Conclusion

Technology, social media, new trends also lead to the restructuring of public relations and the expansion of their application areas. Online environments and social media offer the opportunity to reach much wider and potential audiences. The fact that these environments are fast and interactive expands the areas of public relations practice and requires them to be more equipped. Creating remarkable and creative content is a precondition to attract the attention of target audiences. The tools available for real-time public relations are more diverse than ever. Real-time public relations is also effective in building reputation. Therefore, all employees of the institution are representatives on social media. It is also of great importance

during a crisis. A detailed plan for well-trained employees and real-time crisis management creates a positive image through a controlled communication process. Real-time communication has become a natural process today, when we carry out many conceivable tasks such as shopping, chatting, visiting museums on the other side of the world, holding business meetings, and marketing through social media and the internet. If institutions know what to do about it, they are aware of a huge opportunity. The first step being in real-time is web pages. Today's communication doors, which are always open in every way, require real-time communication. Mobile devices are one of the most popular for building real-time relationships. The fact that social media is widely accepted as an effective media for public relations activities and the opportunities it has to perform real-time behavior support this effect positively.

In general, real-time public relations strategies are based on the effective use of social media and digital platforms. Instant feedback mechanisms, crisis management, mobile application services, sponsorship, social responsibility increase customer satisfaction and help to establish strong ties with the community. This strategic approach ensures that brands maintain their competitiveness in the sector and continuously increase their brand value.

Being able to connect with the target audience in real time is more than just acting with a marketing plan. Identifying needs and finding quick solutions is possible with good social listening. Being actively present on social media is a strategic step that affects the positioning of the brand in the mind of the target audience, increasing brand awareness and strengthening the reputation.

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CORPORATE IMAGE IN DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

Seval ÜRKMEZ[*]

Introduction

Public relations are generally planned and systematic communication activities that act as a bridge between an organization and the target audiences it wants to influence. Institutions and organizations make use of various communication tools to promote their products/services, to create and maintain a corporate image, and to transfer public relations activities such as social responsibility and sponsorship to the public. Since the emergence of the concept of public relations and the acceptance of its importance by institutions, almost every institution has taken care to use communication tools effectively.

Within the scope of public relations activities, companies initially actively used traditional communication tools such as television, radio and newspapers. The advent of internet-based technological tools and the subsequent development of Web 2.0 and now Web 3.0 technology has undoubtedly transformed the communication tools used in the field of public relations. Indeed, in the 21st century, which is often referred to as the "age of technology," smartphones, which are widely used by the general public, contain a plethora of tools. Nowadays, smartphone users can quickly access various reviews of any product or company. In light of the crucial role that preferability plays for institutions and organizations in the contemporary global context, it has become imperative for these entities to proactively engage with digital communication tools. The term "digital public relations" is defined as the utilisation of novel communication technologies within the context of public relations activities conducted by institutions and organisations. It is a crucial strategy for businesses aiming to enhance their preferability by differentiating themselves from their competitors. The utilisation of digital public relations tools enables businesses to undertake promotional activities, cultivate a favourable image among consumers and contribute to their corporate reputation.

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The number of individuals utilizing novel communication technologies in our country and across the globe is on a steady incline, with an increase observed on a daily basis. The advent of new communication technologies has provided users with the ability to utilize a multitude of communication tools simultaneously. People can now watch television channels, listen to the radio and even become content producers using various social media platforms with a single tool. Individuals who previously only read, watched and listened to the content of communication tools can now question the content presented to them. Prior to making a purchase, consumers can examine the features of the product on the website and access user comments from various search engines. The utilisation of digital communication tools has the potential to transform individuals who are typically passive recipients in the communication process into active content producers. Therefore, it is crucial for businesses that aspire to cultivate positive relationships with their target audiences to employ these tools in a strategic and appropriate manner. The deployment of digital public relations tools, which encompass corporate websites, blog sites, and social networking sites that facilitate uninhibited interaction and communication among their users, is indispensable for businesses striving to attain their long-term objectives. Given that the primary objective of public relations professionals is to establish and maintain effective communication with the target audiences of institutions and organizations, the active utilization of digital communication tools has become imperative.

The objective of this study is to identify and examine the various strategies employed by corporations in the domain of digital public relations for the purpose of shaping and influencing their image. In this context, the theoretical information about the concepts of image and corporate image will be presented initially, followed by an examination of examples of corporate image studies of various brands in the digital environment.

1. Image and Corporate Image

As a consequence of the intensification of globalization, diversity has also increased in terms of people's preferences with regard to any given product or service. Individuals who wish to select a multitude of products and services undoubtedly make their decisions based on the perceptions formed in their minds. In general, the concept of image, which is characterized as the perception formed in the minds of individuals regarding any person, institution, or event, has become a phenomenon of increasing importance on a daily basis.

According to Peltekoğlu, image is all of the thoughts that emerge as a result of the subjective evaluations of the personnel working within the body of any institution, the organization's partners and unions that constitute the internal target audience of the institution, and the customers and private-public institutions that constitute the external target audience (Peltekoğlu, 1997: 128). There are a number of elements that enable the formation of image, which is considered as all of the perceptions that exist in the minds of individuals about institutions and organizations. These are, respectively, the level of information, the judgments made, and the opportunities and services offered to individuals (Karpat, 1999: 83). The level of information, which is the first step of image formation, refers to the information that individuals obtain about institutions/organizations through various advertising and promotional activities, organizations and communication tools. The information obtained by individuals against institutions turns into attitudes over time. Judgments are formed as a result of the attitudes and evaluations formed in the minds of individuals regarding any person, subject or event. Judgments formed as a result of the information process are the determining factor in the perception process. The various environmental, legal and economic conditions in which the individual lives constitute the element of opportunities and services. These three important elements go through the perception process of the individual and lead to the formation of an image (Öğüt & Sarıyıldız, 2018: 491).

The image, which is constituted through a series of stages, may vary from one individual to another and may be perceived in a positive or negative manner. All entities possess an image. A multitude of entities, including individuals, institutions, brands, and products, possess a specific perception and image within the minds of the general public. To illustrate, in recent years, considerable effort has been invested in fostering a positive image of the country. As with corporate image, the implementation of well-planned and well-funded public relations initiatives is of paramount importance for the creation of the desired perception at both national and international levels. Additionally, the image of a country is reflected in the products, brands, and institutions of that country (Yavuz & Özüpek, 2022:614).

Considering that the main purpose of companies in the global world we are in is to be preferred, the element of image comes to the fore much more. So much so that many institutions that want to leave a positive impression in the minds of their consumers carry out various communication activities for this purpose. In order to gain and retain customers, instituti-

ons and organizations have made a concerted effort to cultivate a positive image while also ensuring the provision of high-quality products and services. The purchasing behavior of consumers is influenced by the image that a product evokes, rather than by the intrinsic quality of the product itself. Moreover, an institution that has succeeded in creating a positive image in the minds of its target audiences can reinforce its existing image by attaining a reputation within the corporate sector over time. In order for an organization to cultivate a favorable image among its target audiences, it is essential to first ascertain the image it aspires to project. Organizational image-building efforts that are not aligned with a clear objective and intended impact are unlikely to yield positive outcomes. Consequently, it is imperative that organizations first delineate the image they aspire to project and conduct parallel image studies to ascertain its impact and perception. Subsequently, they should proceed to ascertain the image that they have cultivated in the minds of their target audiences. In the event that the current image of the organization among consumers differs from the desired image, it is recommended that image studies be conducted to facilitate a change in perception (Taslak & Akın, 2005: 267).

The formation of image is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a multitude of factors. The following is a list of the various types of images:

1. Personal Image: In the contemporary era, a multitude of variables, including product packaging, color selection, promotional activities, and the manner in which a business is presented to the consumer, can influence the image perception of a business in the consumer's mind, with the objective of enhancing its desirability. Similarly, factors influencing the corporate image of businesses also affect the personal image of individuals. For example, in addition to an individual's external appearance, communication features such as body language, tone of voice, and writing/listening skills utilized in non-verbal communication also contribute to their personal image. Elements such as experience, exceptional abilities, and one's disposition towards events also influence this perception. The collective perception of these individual characteristics is defined as personal image (Canöz & Canöz, 2014: 425).

2. Product Image: In general, the product image is the representation of the distinctive features that differentiate a product from its counterparts. The formation of the product image is influenced by a number of factors, including the psychological characteristics of the

consumer, such as self-confidence and the experience of success that is anticipated following the purchase of the product. Additionally, the physical characteristics of the product, as well as the colors used in the packaging, play a role in shaping the image of the product (Çetin &Tekiner, 2015: 421).

3. Perceived Image: It is the evaluation of an institution and its products by its owner. An illustrative example of this type of image is a designer's self-evaluation of their own product, or a person's self-evaluation of their own child (Canöz, 2018: 58).

4. Brand Image: It is all of the perceptions, feelings, thoughts and beliefs formed in people's minds about a brand. Brand image is also the perception of consumers when a brand is compared with its competitors (Özdemir and Karaca, 2009: 117).

5. Foreign Image: It is the image formed in the minds of people who are not directly involved in the production of a product or service (Peltekoğlu, 2007: 569).

6. Current Image: It is defined as the image that institutions and organizations have today. In order to understand this type of image, it should be taken into account that the concept of image can change with positive/negative feedbacks and therefore has a dynamic and ever-changing characteristic (Peltekoğlu, 2007: 570).

7. Desired Image: It is the image that the organization aims to have as a result of the researches carried out (Peltekoğlu, 2007: 570).

8. Positive Image: It is the image formed as a result of successful businesses being perceived as a reliable institution in the eyes of their target audience and being associated with positive expressions such as attractive and sympathetic (Bakan, 2008: 298).

9. Negative Image: It is formed as a result of any behavior that is not expected from an organization, such as an employee who does not do his/her job well in an organization, poor reception of customers and damage to the nature of the business (Peltekoğlu, 2007: 570).

10. Transfer Image: Generally, the positive image of an international brand is reflected in a different product of the same brand (Peltekoğlu, 2007: 570).

11. Mirror image: It is the type of image created by the employees of an enterprise, especially the founder and manager, in the minds of individuals outside the enterprise (Göksel & Yurdakul, 2002: 202).

12. Umbrella image: This type of image, which is also characterized as top image, refers to the fact that the business is stretched like an umbrella over all brands and fields of activity (Özüpek, 2005: 113).

13. Intangible Image: It is the image realized through various opinions, thoughts and impressions of individuals (Gökdeniz & Aşık, 2008: 137).

14. Store image: It is the way in which all psychological and functional qualities of a store are defined in the minds of the customers it aims to reach (Yücel & Yücel, 2012: 99).

15. Corporate Image: It is all of the evaluations formed in the minds of individuals as a result of the architectural structure expressing the physical characteristics of the organization such as the founding philosophy and history of the enterprises, the variety of products and services offered to consumers and the communication with the target audience (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001: 228).

The common point of the definitions of the concept of corporate image in the literature is the way institutions and organizations are perceived by their target audiences. When the point that the definitions emphasize is the target audience, hence the individual, there may be differences in the perception of corporate image. Considering the changes in social life and technological fields with globalization, it is more clearly understood that corporate image is a dynamic and variable element. The emphasis in the definitions of corporate image on the perception formed in the minds of individuals about the organization undoubtedly leads to the conclusion that this concept may differ according to each individual. The concept of corporate image, which can differ according to individuals, is variable (Canöz, 2015: 26).

It would be prudent for businesses to recognize that their corporate image is not a fixed entity; rather, it is a dynamic and variable component. Each business entity possesses a distinctive image. The degree to which the image is perceived as positive or negative is directly proportional to the extent of image studies conducted by the business. It is incumbent upon businesses to endeavor to cultivate a favorable image. Once a positive image has been established, it is essential to implement strategies to ensure that this perception is maintained.

The initial phase of developing a favorable corporate image entails the identification of the fundamental elements that comprise the image and the implementation of corresponding actions. The corporate image is

comprised of three key elements: corporate appearance, corporate communication, and corporate behavior. Corporate appearance encompasses a multitude of elements, including the corporate logo, the colors utilized in the logo, emblem, writing style, typography, emblem and symbols incorporated into the design of the stores where businesses interact with consumers, the architectural structure of the store, and the uniforms worn by the employees of the business (Derin & Demirel, 2010: 161). Corporate communication can be defined as the communication activities carried out by institutions and organizations with the objective of promoting their products and services. Communication with consumers and potential customers, representing the external target group of the organization, as well as communication with employees, constituting the internal target group, affects corporate image (Johan & Noor, 2013: 1230-1231). It can be reasonably assumed that employees who feel valued by the organization through various communication activities will exhibit high levels of job satisfaction and productivity. The motivation of employees with high job satisfaction will be reflected in the communication of the organization with its customers, thereby contributing positively to the corporate image. The other element of creating a corporate image is corporate behavior, which consists of the behaviors of the employees of the organization towards the customers. These include communicating with a smiling face, showing interest and sympathy, and being helpful. They also include the adoption and use of the colors, slogans, and products belonging to the organization by the employees. Additionally, the speeches exhibited by the employees of the organization towards the customers contribute to the corporate image. (Canöz, 2018: 60). These four important elements are extremely effective in the formation of corporate image. When institutions and organizations want to have a positive corporate image, they should first determine the target audience they want to influence and convey their messages to them through various communication strategies. However, institutions and organizations should be extremely careful in creating the messages they will convey to the target audience. When creating messages, they should be well-intentioned, respectful and sincere towards consumers, realistic and avoid exaggeration. In addition to these, every organization that wants to have a strong corporate image should first realize the following stages (Canöz, 2018: 32):

1- Creating the Infrastructure:

The first step in the corporate image-building process is to establish a robust infrastructure. The infrastructure of an institution or organization is constituted by the vision and mission statements that serve to express the corporate identity of the institution in question. It is recommended that organisations first establish a robust corporate identity in order to facilitate the formation of a coherent corporate image. The most significant factor influencing the development of corporate identity during the infrastructure creation phase is the accurate establishment of vision and mission concepts (Bolat, 2016: 112). The concepts of vision and mission, which play a significant role in identity formation, are frequently conflated and confused with one another. The concept of vision, which provides direction for the organization in achieving its goals and reveals its primary objectives, generally signifies the desired future position and direction of the organization. The vision should be transparent and comprehensible to employees at all levels of the organization, aligned with the business objectives, and should serve to motivate employees (Kılıç, 2010: 89). The concept of mission represents a further stage in the infrastructure creation process and defines the purpose of the business, reflecting the corporate identity to its target audiences. The concept of mission serves to differentiate a business from its competitors and elucidates the objective to be attained. It should encompass the overarching characteristics of the business (Erol & Kanbur, 2014: 153).

2- Construction of an External Image

The second stage of corporate image building, which is the creation of an external image, is comprised of the following processes (Özüpek, 2005: 171):

Product Quality: The basic condition for institutions and organizations to compete with their competitors in the global market is undoubtedly linked to the quality of the products they put on the market. Organizations that offer qualified products to their consumers have a positive external image in social life (Bromley, 1943, as cited in Çetin & Tekiner, 2015: 425).

Concrete image building, the second step of **external image building**, refers to the visual identity of the organization. **Advertising,** one of the steps of external image building, refers to the promotion of the products and services that the organization will offer to its consumers. At the stage of **media,** corporate image building, businesses benefit from media tools

and media at the point of announcing both promotion and various communication activities to their target audiences. While conveying their messages to their consumers, businesses should pay attention to the choice of media and take a positive place in the media. Since corporate image characterizes the perception of individuals about the institution in question, it is very important to include positive news in the media that will enable the organization to achieve its goals. Especially in today's world where technology is so accessible, a positive/negative news about an organization from various communication tools will also affect the perception of the target audiences about that organization.

3- Internal Image Building

Internal image building represents the third step of corporate image building. It refers to the communication of businesses with their own personnel, who constitute the internal target audience. The internal image of a business is typically defined as the manner in which the business is perceived by its own employees. This perception is then reflected by the employees to consumers (Şişli & Köse, 2013: 167). The assessment of a business by its employees as a positive, people-oriented organization that provides quality products and services will facilitate the establishment of positive employee-employer relationships and influence the public perception of the business.

4- Creating an Intangible Image

Intangible image is associated with ensuring the brand loyalty of individuals who use the product launched by the business rather than the success in sales and profit rates of businesses (Çetin and Tekiner, 2015:426). In addition to the quality and cost of the purchased product, what consumers feel is also important. Consumers' emotional needs affect their preference for the product. Businesses that want to create an intangible image in public opinion should take into account the wishes, expectations and needs of their target audience (Gökdeniz & Aşık, 2008: 137).

1.1 Elements Affecting Corporate Image

Although the factors affecting corporate image formation differ according to the sector and organization, the studies have common points. In his 2005 study based on shopping center customers, Bakan identified four factors that determine corporate image. These are corporate appearance, social responsibility, product/service quality and corporate communication (Bakan, 2005: 39-40). In a study on the determinants of corporate image in

the service sector, the following factors were identified: the personnel of the business, communication activities, the physical environment of the business, corporate identity activities and reputation of the business (Leblanch & Nguyen, 1996: 46). Although the determinants of corporate image differ according to the researchers, they are generally the visual identity that reflects the identity of the organization, the corporate social responsibility activities carried out by the organization for the benefit of the society, the corporate communication carried out by the organization in communication with both internal and external target audiences, and the quality of the product/service offered by the organization to the market (Canöz, 2018: 38).

1.1.1 Visual Identity

In interpersonal communication, elements such as the tone of voice, body language, choice of clothing, etc. are significant for forming an initial impression of an individual. Similarly, businesses can leverage certain elements to create a favorable first impression on their target audiences. One of the key elements of corporate image is visual identity, which encompasses the overall corporate appearance. This is made up of various components that collectively represent the image of the organization. It encompasses tangible elements such as the name, logo, emblem, typography, chromatic palette utilized in the logo and emblem, and the slogan (Peltekoğlu, 2007: 554).

- Corporate Name: The corporate name, which expresses what businesses do and who they are, is beyond a name. The name of the business is the only element that will enable the business to be recognized by the target audience. Therefore, when determining the name of institutions and organizations, the name should be chosen in accordance with the market where the business is located and the values of the business (Peltekoğlu, 2007: 554).

- Logo and Symbols: The logo, which is one of the basic elements used in creating the corporate identities of businesses, consists of symbols or signs that make the product offered by businesses to the market different from its competitors. The emblem, which is often confused with the logo, is designed to reach illiterate individuals (Canöz, 2015: 40).

- Corporate slogan: Slogans, which reveal the purpose of the existence of the product or service produced by the business, enable businesses to be remembered by gaining a place in the minds of their target audiences (Dündar, 2013: 96).

- Color: The colors that the business prefers to use in corporate identity works should reflect the identity and culture of the business to the target audiences (Topçu, 2017: 159).

- Lettering/Letter Character: The fact that the lettering and typeface, which are among the basic elements of corporate identity, are compatible with the business and brand contributes to the image (Tan, 2016: 389).

These elements serve as the fundamental constituents of corporate identity, which represents a primary determinant of corporate image. The formation of a successful corporate identity is an effective means of ensuring a positive corporate image. The use of specific elements, such as color, typeface, and slogan, can enhance the memorability of a product. For example, companies engaged in the production of food and beverages may find the color red to be advantageous, given its capacity to stimulate appetite and elicit a spontaneous response. In addition to color, the selection of compatible slogans contributes to the enhancement of the corporate image and increases its appeal. Coffee, a beverage consumed by a majority of individuals upon waking to provide energy and by students in academic settings to facilitate cognitive processes, has become a pervasive element of social life through the strategic deployment of effective slogan and color studies. The Turkish coffee brand has positioned itself as a symbol of remembrance and shared moments, as exemplified by its "Moments to Share" slogan. This narrative has resonated with consumers, contributing to the brand's positive image in the market.

1.1.2. Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to the voluntary activities undertaken by businesses for the benefit of society and the environment. These activities contribute to the formation of the corporate image. The implementation of social responsibility activities by businesses for the benefit of society will result in a positive alteration of the perception of the organization's external target audiences, as well as its personnel. A positive perception will facilitate the creation of a positive image, thereby ensuring the satisfaction of target audiences (Gültekin & Küçük, 2004: 344–345).

The positive image and reputation gained as a result of corporate social responsibility activities are vital for businesses. The opportunities that organizations gain from corporate social responsibility activities are not only economic. In addition to economic benefits, companies will increase their brand value by gaining respect from the public through social responsibility activities. In addition, successful corporate social responsibility activi-

ties will create a positive impression on the organization's employees and attract qualified personnel to the organization. In addition, companies that emphasize social responsibility projects can increase their equity by borrowing at better conditions. Corporate social responsibility makes it easier for companies to enter new markets and reach loyal customers (Argüden, 2002 cited in Aktan & Börü, 2007: 20).

1.1.3. Corporate Communication

Corporate communication refers to the methods utilized to disseminate messages that espouse the social and economic ideas of businesses to designated target audiences (Canöz, 2018: 60). The effectiveness of corporate communication is influenced by a multitude of factors, including the choice of communication tools employed to convey the objectives of the enterprise to the target audience, the style and tone of communication utilized in written correspondence, and the quality of the paper used in such correspondence.

The principal application areas of corporate communication are public relations, corporate advertising, and sponsorship. One of the application areas of corporate communication is public relations, which can be defined as the management of communication between a business and its target audiences (Kalender, 2008: 25). In order to cultivate a favorable corporate image through public relations initiatives, businesses must engage in promotional activities, disseminate positive news across diverse media platforms to foster a constructive perception among the public, organize events to boost employee morale, and maintain a robust online presence (Bakan, 2008: 303). Corporate advertising represents a public relations technique and serves as the visible voice of the business (Okay & Okay, 2012: 317).

In general, businesses utilize corporate advertisements to remind consumers of their brand, disseminate information about the product or service they have introduced to the market, and cultivate a robust corporate identity and favorable corporate image (Diker & Şakı, 2020: 57). Sponsorship represents another public relations technique that enables businesses to communicate with their consumers by taking part in events such as those related to health, culture and the arts, education, and sports. By communicating through sponsorship, businesses can disseminate positive messages about themselves to the public, thereby differentiating themselves from their competitors. In this manner, a connection between the sponsored event and the brand will be forged, and a perception of brand loyalty will emerge among consumers. A company's corporate image can be

enhanced through strategic sponsorship activities, provided that the requisite importance is accorded to such initiatives and that the selected activities align with the company's objectives and are executed at opportune moments. Consequently, businesses must select the individual, entity, or event to which they will offer support, ensuring alignment with their overarching vision and mission (Demir, 2023: 208).

1.1.4. Corporate Quality

Quality is generally the recognition of the feature and character of something by other people, as well as the positive name and reputation it leaves on the people who use the product in question (Reputaton, 2022, as cited in Güllüpunar, 2022: 42).

The quality of a corporation, which is among the most significant factors influencing the corporate image, shapes the perceptions of target audiences regarding the products and businesses they utilize. The perception of a business is contingent upon the quality of the products and services it offers. Accordingly, there is a mutual influence between corporate image and quality (Ergür, 2012, as cited in Aydemir, 2022: 28).

Product and service quality is generally considered in three dimensions:

- Physical quality: is the quality dimension consisting of the physical components of the product or service offered. Physical components consist of physical product and physical support. Physical product refers to the goods consumed by the enterprise while producing a product/service. Physical support, on the other hand, refers to the environment and materials that the business utilizes during the production phase (Tunç, 2017 as cited in Çiçek, 2019: 53).

- Interaction quality: is the interaction between the customers using the product or service and the people in contact with them. Interaction quality can be between the staff serving the customer and the customer, or between existing customers and customers who have used the product before.

- Business quality: is the evaluation of the business by potential customers and existing customers in terms of its public image. Although the quality of the product/service offered by an enterprise to its consumers deteriorates over time, if it has a strong image, it can maintain its corporate image for a long time. Therefore, business quality is related to how the customers of the business in question evaluate the business (Tunç, 2017 as cited in Çiçek, 2019: 53).

The concept of quality, which is handled in various dimensions, is important in terms of product and business preference. So much so that quality has been identified as the most important factor affecting image in studies that emphasize the factors affecting corporate image formation (Bakan, 2005: 59; Çerçi, 2019: 104; Canöz, 2015: 136). The quality of the products and services offered by businesses to their target audiences also changes the image perception of consumers regarding that business. In summary, businesses that want to have a positive image in the eyes of their consumers should act by giving due importance to the quality factor in product and service production. Every organization that does not want to lose its potential customers and even wants to increase its customers over time should prioritize quality. Otherwise, every product perceived as unqualified will reflect negatively on the image of the business.

1.2. Corporate Image Management in Digital Public Relations

In the 21st century, as a result of the changes and developments in the field of communication technologies, the existing understanding of public relations has also changed. Public relations experts, who previously used only traditional communication tools such as radio, television, magazines and newspapers, have had to turn to different tools to reach their target audiences as a result of technological developments.

According to Yavuz and Tarhan, the emergence of new mass media has made it easier for people to access traditional mass media. Thus, digital media, which offer many opportunities together, and traditional mass media have been used in public relations activities in an integrated manner, and traditional mass media have maintained their basic functions (2021: 453).

Today, public relations activities on the internet, which we define as digital public relations, have evolved to encompass the virtual environment, diverging from the conventional practices that have been observed over time. The evolution of communication tools in the field of public relations has resulted in the need for differentiation in public relations practice areas. In particular, the 2000s, which we refer to as the "millennium age," have seen a significant increase in the use of both new and traditional communication technologies by businesses targeting specific audiences. This has led to a greater emphasis on the effective utilization of new media environments within the realm of public relations practice.

The increasing number of users of the internet and new communication technologies requires public relations practice areas to be moved to

digital platforms. As of 2023, the number of internet users in the world is 5.16 billion and the number of social media users is 4.76 billion. As a result of the research on individuals' use of new communication technologies, it has been revealed that participants generally turn to these tools to obtain information, follow current events and news, research products and brands, and communicate. In addition, as a result of the research, it was determined that individuals generally discover new brands by finding them from social media advertisements and search engines (https://www. clicksus.com/we-are-social-2023-global-ve-turkiye-raporu, Access Date: 20.06.2024).

The increasing number of users of digital communication tools on a daily basis, the fact that they primarily conduct research in digital environments when making a purchase decision, has prompted businesses to actively utilize these tools. Furthermore, the expansion in the number of users enables individuals to utilize new media tools and environments to gain not only the information provided by businesses but also the experiences of other users regarding the utilization of the same product or service and their opinions about the business in question. The evaluations and comments made by users in new media environments are enduring (Çetinkaya, 2015: 59). Comments and reviews made by individuals using similar products in digital environments will later appear in internet searches conducted by other users and potential customers of the business. The results that appear in search engines regarding the business or the product and service launched by the business will influence the formation of a positive or negative perception of the brand in individuals. Such perceptions will lead to the formation of a digital image, given the transfer of the brand and corporate image to the virtual environment (Kurtulay & Kızılırmak, 2017: 244).

The building of a positive image is contingent upon the establishment of productive relationships between businesses and their target audiences. Thus, businesses would be well advised to consider and care about every communication tool that their target audiences actively use. In light of the fact that digital communication tools have billions of users, it can be said that the significance of these environments is growing daily for businesses that aim to successfully manage their image and interact with their target audiences (Karabulut, 2009, cited in Çetinkaya, 2015: 59).

In order to differentiate themselves from their competitors and enhance their reputation, businesses engage in a range of public relations activities, including social responsibility, sponsorship, advertising, and the ma-

nagement of their corporate image in digital media. In comparison to traditional media, the utilisation of digital tools, which offer the potential to reach a greater number of individuals in a shorter timeframe than traditional media, in the construction and dissemination of corporate image presents a range of advantages and disadvantages to businesses. As a consequence of the transformation of communication tools, the image studies of businesses that use communication as a tool have also been affected. The advent of digital communication tools has introduced novel features to the concept of communication, and in turn, the image studies of businesses have also been transferred to these digital environments. In addition to traditional media, the advent of popular sharing sites has rendered image management in digital environments a necessity for businesses, who have begun to reflect their image through digital communication tools (Savaş, 2020: 67).

Today, businesses use many tools to communicate with target audiences. In digital public relations activities, businesses generally actively use tools such as corporate web pages, social media environments, blogs and forum sites (Abrak & Küçüksaraç, 2017: 5045). Digital image management generally involves meticulous monitoring of all kinds of comments and criticisms made on digital tools regarding the business, business manager or the product or service produced by the business. Within the scope of digital image management, businesses should systematically update their corporate web page, social media tools, digital press release and corporate blog (Koçyiğit, 2017: 233-235).

There are various advantages and disadvantages of using digital public relations tools in corporate image management. The active use of digital tools by businesses makes it easier to communicate with target audiences. Thanks to the opportunities offered by digital environments to individuals, feedback from target audiences can be received easily and can be returned quickly. Businesses that respond quickly to consumers' complaints and questions on digital platforms gain a positive image in the eyes of their target audiences (Kartal & Algül, 2019: 60). The freedom offered by social media to individuals encourages businesses as well as consumers to use social media. Successful promotional activities carried out in digital environments will accelerate the formation of corporate image. The most important advantage that social media environments offer to businesses is that opinions and thoughts about the business can be easily learned by both the stakeholders of the business and an individual independent of the business. In this way, businesses have the opportunity to create image ma-

nagement in line with the expectations of their target audiences by conducting due diligence. Institutions and organizations can ensure that the corporate philosophy, corporate values and desired image are conveyed accurately and without distortion by giving the necessary priority to service quality and promotional activities by using social media tools (Yüksel, 2023: 183-184). With the opportunities offered by unlimited communication, businesses can create an agenda in line with the values of the organization on digital platforms (Esrock & Leichty, 1999: 457). For example, businesses that use corporate websites correctly and effectively can address a specific community by sharing different content according to the demands and expectations of their target audience (Bilbil, 2008: 69).

Businesses can use digital media environments, which allow them to reach specific audiences by setting an agenda, for a variety of purposes. Nowadays, companies can use corporate websites and social media tools to identify business partners, establish various business relationships online, establish two-way communication with customers, post job advertisements, and publish advertisements to promote products and services. Thus, companies can carry out corporate image creation and management activities in social media environments (Thew, 2008 cited in Yüksel, 2023: 180).

Participation in the social media environment, which is one of the most effective communication tools for businesses today, carries some risks as well as positive image contributions. The fact that social media is difficult to control and monitor can be detrimental to businesses. A negative news about a company in digital environments can quickly reach millions of people. Therefore, businesses need to follow all kinds of news in digital media and intervene correctly in a timely manner. (Koçer, 2017:757). Digital tools that allow millions of people to be instantly aware of a possible crisis and to act collectively and quickly in a coordinated manner allow businesses to gain a great reputation with small strategies, but it is possible to damage the image and reputation of the organization with a wrong intervention (Çelebi, 2020: 109).

Companies should consider the long-term nature of information on the internet. Information on the Internet can be remembered for a long time. Slander and rumors about the company from years ago can damage the company's image even after time has passed. At this point, companies can eliminate negative perceptions and misunderstandings about the organization by properly and effectively using social media environments and blog sites. In the case of possible defamation and false rumors, companies sho-

uld consult accurate and reliable sources instead of denying them. The most critical point for companies in online image management is the control of rumors that may appear in digital tools about the company itself, its manager or the product it produces. In this context, businesses should regularly check the corporate website, social media tools and blogs, determine what is important and unimportant in digital tools and determine the public relations strategy to be implemented in case of a possible crisis (Middleberg 2001, as cited in Koçyiğit and Çakırkaya, 2019:9).

Companies should do the following to successfully manage their online image:

- Provide accurate information to online news editors, blog and website administrators in the event of a rumor,

- Alert internal audiences such as business partners, company employees, and the media about misinformation,

- Provide detailed information and explanations on the company website if the problem is widespread and has become a crisis,

- Care about and take seriously the opinions and feedback of internal and external audiences about the organization or product/service.

What not to do for successful online image management:

- Overreacting and denial in a crisis,

- Taking legal action instead of implementing an effective communication strategy,

- Expecting the crisis to be resolved instantly and quickly,

- Covering up and trying to hide a problem that may damage the image (Midddleberg, 2001 as cited in Koçyiğit, 2017: 238-239).

In summary, companies should consider the advantages and disadvantages of digital tools for business. Companies should develop reactive public relations strategies for a potential crisis by adapting to technology. They should definitely monitor the negative content that may appear on search engines and social media tools regarding the company, the executive, or the product and service. In addition to content monitoring, companies should ensure that positive content about the product ranks highly in search engines and seek expert assistance on issues such as search engine and social media optimization to increase favorability.

1.3. Examples of Creating Corporate Image in Digital Public Relations

This section of the study gives several examples of how companies and brands use digital public relations tools to communicate their corporate

image activities to their target audiences. Corporate image is created through various studies in new media environments, which today are also called digital PR tools. In this context, companies share their identity studies to promote their brands, social responsibility studies to show their target audiences their sensitivity to issues that are valuable and important to them, sponsorship studies carried out with the intention of creating an image by supporting different organizations, and the certificates they have received in the field of quality to make the existing corporate image perception continuous and change the negative image perception, if any, with their target audiences through their website.

Consumers who intend to purchase a product or service make a purchasing decision by examining the organization's website. An effective and functional website increases the preference of the brand in the minds of consumers. Thus, the organization has a positive image in the minds of consumers (Ageeva et al., 2018:5). Through the website, the corporate identity, which is part of online image management, is created and transferred to the target audience. Therefore, consumers have a positive/negative image perception according to their perception of the company's website (Ageeva et al., 2018:5).

The following are examples of some of the companies that create their corporate identity and image through their web sites:

Example: Online Corporate Image Study of Arçelik Brand (https://www.arcelik.com.tr/)

Companies can easily introduce their corporate identity to their target audience through their websites. It can be seen above that the corporate website of Arçelik Brand includes identity elements that will ensure the formation of the corporate image. There is the logo, emblem and colors used by the company. The corporate tab of the website includes sponsorship activities, investor relations, media relations and social responsibility activities of Arçelik brand. In the support tab, an online expert can be contacted 7 days a week so that customers can easily contact in case of a possible problem. In the support tab, there is also a separate section on the website for consumers who use the brand to create a claim record for the

product they have purchased. In this way, the customer can make an appointment on the day and time that is convenient for them to make a claim for the product that they have purchased on the website. It is also possible to easily access price information on the Arçelik brand website. In addition, customers can benefit from online catalogs and brochures prepared for each product they want to have information about without going to the store.

The website includes identity elements that influence the company's image, company policies, product and pricing information, and a communication network that facilitates feedback. Through the website, companies can easily reach their target audience and contribute to their image through effective communication channels.

Example: Online Press Release of Opet Brand (https://www.opet.com.tr/basin-bultenleri)

Example: Online Corporate Magazine of Opet Brand (https://www.opet.com.tr/kilometre-dergisi)

Other corporate image activities in the digital environment are online press releases and corporate magazines. The Opet brand regularly shares with its target audiences its public relations practices, such as various agreements, projects, awards and social responsibility activities, through the Press Releases tab on its website. In addition to online press releases, Opet presents its target audiences on its website with the Kilometre Magazine, which is published three times a year. The Kilometre Magazine contains information on special days, dealer meetings, projects carried out, awards received by the brand and routes that can be visited by customers on the move.

Example: Online Sponsorship Study of Ülker Brand (https://www.ulker.com.tr/tr)

One of the online corporate image activities is to announce sponsorship deals that companies have entered into to their target audiences in the digital environment. Ülker, a domestic snack brand, announces its official sponsorship of the Turkish national soccer team to its target audiences both in traditional media and on its website. The website's home page features a promotional film about its sponsorship of the national team. In this way, Ülker has gained the sympathy of its target audiences and contributed positively to its image by announcing its sponsorship of the national team in the Champions League, which has recently been on the agenda of our country, through various communication tools.

Example: Online Social Responsibility Work of Ülker Brand (https://www.ulker.com.tr/tr)

Ülker brand has carried out various social responsibility projects in the fields of culture and art, sports and environment in order to gain the sympathy of its target groups. Ülker brand, whose target audience is mainly children, has carried out its social responsibility activities with projects that will attract the attention of children. Like many other brands, Ülker has announced its social responsibility activities to its target audiences by publishing them on its website.

Conclusion

Transformations in the communication process have had a profound impact on virtually every aspect of social life. This phenomenon has reached such a scale that individuals can readily satisfy a multitude of their needs, including shopping, acquiring information, socializing, job searching and applying for positions, and pursuing education, through the use of digital communication tools. As a consequence of this pervasive digitalization of social life, radical transformations have occurred in the domains of communication and public relations. Until the emergence of new media tools, individuals who only used traditional communication tools were in a passive state, whereas with the development of digital tools, users have become active participants in the communication process. Individuals who use traditional communication tools such as television, radio and newspapers and accept the information presented to them as it is, have been replaced by technology-oriented individuals who question, research and can instantly access the information they want with a single click. Therefore, it has become imperative for businesses to change their public relations approach in today's digital environment.

Today, the studies carried out within the scope of communication strategies that we define as digital public relations have facilitated feedback by enabling businesses to communicate more effectively and quickly with their target audiences. The fact that digital tools offer businesses the opportunity to learn about consumers' wants and needs and to respond quickly to their complaints and questions has accelerated the use of these tools in the field of public relations. Due to the various opportunities it offers, brands have moved their public relations activities to the digital environment in order to promote themselves, contribute to their image and gain the trust of their target audiences.

The objective of corporate image management, which constitutes a significant aspect of digital public relations, is to establish a robust connection between businesses and their target audiences through the utilisation of virtual media tools, thereby fostering a favourable perception over time. By disseminating the visual materials they have created for this purpose on the digital platforms of the organization, businesses can reach their target audiences and gain a competitive advantage. The announcement of public relations activities conducted by businesses via corporate web pages, blog sites, and social media tools to their target audiences will contribute to their image by fostering a positive perception among the general public. In this context, businesses disseminate public relations materials, such as

online press releases and online magazines, on their websites with the objective of creating a positive image and ensuring its long-term durability. In addition to online newsletters and magazines, activities that can positively impact an organization's image, such as social responsibility initiatives, business sponsorships, and commercial films, are also shared on corporate websites. Furthermore, businesses that wish to emphasise the quality phenomenon, which is the most significant factor influencing corporate image, in the digital domain disseminate quality certificates, awards and user comments on their websites. In order for target audiences to obtain comprehensive information about the business and brand without physically visiting the establishment, numerous organisations endeavour to provide a genuine experience in a virtual setting through the utilisation of 360-degree videos.

In addition to contributing to their image, businesses should proactively utilize digital communication tools to prevent the erosion of their reputation. The dissemination of unsubstantiated information and misinformation in the digital domain can potentially transform into a significant crisis for the brand. Consequently, businesses are advised to adopt a strategic approach to search engine optimization (SEO) with the guidance of experts. This enables businesses to integrate with social media and promptly address any potential crises.

In order to communicate effectively with their target audiences in the digital world, businesses that wish to perform online image management successfully must adapt to digital tools, announce news and projects that will attract the attention of their target audiences in these environments, and organize and implement projects that will affect them in the virtual environment.

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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
IN DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

*Sayinur ŞAKI**

Introduction

Developments in information and communication technologies have led to significant changes in the business world. One of these changes can be seen in public relations activities that act as a bridge between the organisation and its target audience. Public relations activities, which include many practices such as social responsibility, sponsorship, lobbying, crisis management, corporate advertising, reputation management, corporate identity, international public relations, corporate image, media relations, internal public relations, marketing public relations and problem management, have had the chance to be carried out in digital environments thanks to the opportunities offered by internet technologies. This situation has provided the prevalence of practices called "digital public relations" in the literature. Organisations carry out various public relations activities in the digital environment in order to communicate with their target audiences in a two-way and interactive manner. One of the most common and prominent of these is "corporate digital responsibility" activities. Organizations aiming to prove that thay are socialy responsible to the public and thereby gain their trust and sympathy have largely shifted their traditional corporate social responsibility activities to the digital environment. These activities, called corporate digital responsibility, include the responsibilities that organisations should undertake with the transition to digital.

Within the scope of this chapter, firstly the concept of digital public relations is mentioned for a better understanding of the subject, then corporate social responsibility, which constitutes the main subject of the study, the benefits of corporate social responsibility, the dimensions of corporate social responsibility, the types of corporate social responsibility and corporate digital responsibility are explained and sample applications are given.

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1. Digital Public Relations

Many factors such as the competitive structure of the market, the phenomenon of globalisation and the increase in the number of businesses have directed organisations that want to preserve their existence and remain strong to establish more effective communication with their target audiences. Thanks to the radical changes and innovations in information and communication technologies, organisations have been able to establish a stronger, interactive and two-way communication with their target audiences. In particular, the development of Web 2.0 technologies has created new opportunities to reach the target audience groups, who assume the role of both readers and writers who direct the market with their changing demands and needs. At this point, public relations activities, which assume a fundamental role for organisations to maintain their relations with their target audiences in mutual understanding and cooperation, have also found the possibility of application in digital environments thanks to the opportunities offered by new media.

In the internet era we are in, communication technologies are gaining new momentum day by day. This huge innovation and speed in technology has significant effects on public relations activities, communication tools and target audiences. In other words; public relations activities conducted in the traditional sense have experienced a great transformation by being realised in integrity with the digital environment. The concept of digital public relations, which we frequently hear in the business sector with the phenomenon of digitalisation, is the integration of existing public relations practices into activities such as content creation, search engine optimisation (SEO) and social media management. All these digital developments present a structure suitable for the two-way communication of public relations (Özgen,2019:15). According to Hallahan (2004:769), public relations activities realised by various organisations using internet tools for important target groups such as target audiences, shareholders, employees, partners, public institutions and media organs are called digital public relations. The widespread gain of the Internet in the mid-1990s has directed public service organisations, private companies operating in different fields, and non-profit organisations to use the Internet intensively. As a consequence, public relations practices have also been exposed to a significant change in order to adapt to internet technologies.

Digitalization offers opportunities for individuals such as creating various messages through networks, disseminating these messages to broad communities, and making them accessible. Digital media, in other words,

internet-based digital data, represents a structure that provides benefits in many respects. These developments have also had positive reflections on public relations activities. One of these is digital public relations, which enables any organisation to communicate with relevant target groups in online environments by taking advantage of the opportunities brought by the internet and constitutes one of the ways of using digital media (Wiratmo et al., 2017: 326). In another definition, digital public relations is defined as an organisation's use of digital media environments for the purpose of improving its corporate image and reputation. In the implementation process of digital public relations; corporate websites, social media applications such as facebook, instagram, youtube, etc. and various digital communication tools such as podcasts are used (Permatasari et al., 2021: 375).

With the advances in information and communication technologies and correspondingly the widespread digitalisation, the internet has turned into a fundamental tool in terms of public relations experts and practitioners. The concept of digital public relations expresses that public relations activities are carried out using new media tools in the internet environment. Due to the fact that digital media and tools provide two-way interaction with relevant target groups and have a widespread distribution capacity, digital public relations activities should be carried out effectively and carefully in these environments (Şirzad & Turancı, 2019: 422-423). For organizations aware of the advantages provided by digital media, it is crucial that public relations activities are built on a solid communication strategy and are tailored to fit these environments. This is because unsuccessful communication efforts in online environments can significantly damage the organization's image and reputation. Considering the sphere of influence and speed of spread of digital media, it is a key factor for organisations to adapt well to the changes in these environments and to manage their digital public relations activities strongly in order to compete (Koçyiğit, 2017: 42-43). Considering that everything is seen, heard and known at any moment in the specific dynamics of online environments, the fact that digital public relations activities are carried out by qualified public relations experts is an added value for the success of organisations.

New media environments have not only enabled organisations to interact with their customers faster, but also contributed to the instant evaluation of their feedback. Thus, symmetrical communication activities, which form the basis of public relations, have find a much more comfortable application area with the digitalisation process. Organisations can realize the

symmetrical communication activities they want to establish with their target audiences in online environments through digital public relations. Many digital tools such as "social media platforms, websites, blogs, online newsletters, intranet, podcasting and RSS" in online environments serve to successfully maintain digital public relations activities (Sade & Akbulut, 2021: 37-38).

2. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility consists of activities aimed at benefiting the community in which one operates, addressing issues such as "education, environment, health, women's rights, disabled individuals, animal rights, culture, art, and pollution. The recent increase in the ethical sensitivity of societies regarding these issues has increased the demands on businesses to realise corporate social responsibility activities. Nowadays, most businesses see it as a duty for them to engage in corporate social responsibility activities and do their part.

Even though there are different evaluations regarding the emergence of corporate social responsibility, the concept has gained prevalence in the literature since the 1950s. By the 1960s and 1970s, there was an observed increase in the definitions regarding "what corporate social responsibility is. In the following periods, empirical studies on corporate responsibility were conducted and new themes related to the concept were put forward. These themes include business ethics theory, stakeholder theory and corporate social performance (Carroll, 1999: 268). According to Sanrı (2020: 173), corporate social responsibility activities started to develop in the 1950s as a result of various supports made by company owners regarding their understanding of "philanthropy". In the current era, the phenomenon of corporate social responsibility, which has a meaning far beyond philanthropy, has been redefined with the necessity of companies to bring together their economic activities and the demands of the social environment.

With the Industrial Revolution, the physical powers of people were replaced by machines and an intensive mass production process was passed. In line with these developments, the number of organisations carrying out management activities in the modern meaning has increased and various evaluations have been made regarding the environmental consequences of the activities of these organisations. One of these evaluations is the responsibilities that organisations should undertake. Organisations have become aware that they cannot get anywhere only with economic goals

and have determined social goals for themselves in order to be a member of the society in which they operate. As a result of this, the phenomenon of "social responsibility" has acquired an important place in the management activities of organisations (Öztürk & Öktem, 2016: 134).

There are a number of responsibilities that today's societies require organizations to undertake, and all of these responsibilities emerge as requirements of corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility actually defines the expectations of societies from the business environment. In other words, corporate social responsibility constitutes the "economic, legal, ethical and voluntary (optional) responsibilities" that societies expect from businesses at any given time" (Carroll,1979:500). There are different definitions of corporate social responsibility. In the first of these definitions, corporate social responsibility is defined as a concept that is vital in all activities such as vision, mission, strategies and activities of companies; in another definition, it is defined as a concept that will contribute to and preserve corporate image and reputation. From a general perspective, corporate social responsibility is one of the most important requirements for companies to successfully maintain their existence and protect their position in the market. That is why, when most business people want to make an investment, they first consider whether the enterprise carries out corporate social responsibility activities and decide on their investment accordingly (Çelik & Ilgın, 2019: 165).

Corporate social responsibility is expressed as acting with the consciousness of "ethics and responsibility" towards all relevant groups including internal and external target groups of various organisations and implementing their decisions with this consciousness. Although the concept of corporate social responsibility is mostly perceived as various organisations continuing their activities in line with measures to protect the natural environment within the framework of sustainability goals, the responsibilities of organisations are not limited to this. In other words, any organisation should carry a responsibility for all target groups that it contacts or may contact depending on the results of its actions (Aktan & Börü, 2007: 8-9). Organisations that respond to the demands of societies and see their problems as their own problems build a happy society. As a result of this, employees and partners as internal target groups and existing customers and other stakeholders as external target groups are satisfied with organisations and support their activities. At this point, the voluntary activities of organisations for a good future, a livable world and the environment constitute the basis of corporate social responsibility (Argüden, 2007: 26).

Corporate social responsibility activities involve an organization taking on responsibilities beyond its existing legal obligations to its employees, distributors, suppliers, target audiences, and partners, and taking action accordingly. This concept basically points out that organisations accept the consequences of their activities concerning the society and the natural environment and undertake full responsibility for these consequences. Today's modern and conscious societies expect organisations to make activities that contribute to public and social welfare (Robins, 2005:96).

According to Gümüş and Öksüz (2009:2136), the fact that societies demand organisations to take various actions that will provide social benefits makes it obligatory for organisations to operate with social responsibility consciousness. For example, consumers may react by not purchasing the products or services of enterprises that cause destruction in the natural environment with their activities. These negativities have ensured the establishment of social responsibility consciousness in business practices.

Considering that companies cannot act independently from the social environment; when making any decision regarding their own activities, it is essential that they bring together the demands of the communities with which they maintain business relations and the goals of increasing profit maximisation on a common denominator and take into account the situations that may occur in the environment on the way to achieving the goals they have determined (Öztürk & Öktem, 2016: 136). Corporate social responsibility activities bring value to the work of companies in the national and international arena and make their communication with their target audiences stronger. One of the most common problems encountered in the implementation process of corporate social responsibility activities is the "cost" factor. Although companies consider corporate social responsibility activities as an additional cost in the short period, in the long period, these activities provide great advantages in terms of creating a "reliable and socially responsible" company perception on target groups (Seyitoğulları & Bilen, 2020: 203).

Organisations that act with social responsibility consciousness have significant returns and always win. In this direction, the benefits of corporate social responsibility for organisations have been investigated in the studies in the literature and various results have been reached. Accordingly, the first of the benefits provided by corporate social responsibility is " raising the brand value of an organisation and its value in the current market; secondly, making the organisation attractive for expert personnel, ensuring their motivation and permanence in the organisation; thirdly,

improving the creativity and learning levels of organisations; fourthly, finding investors more easily and accordingly raising the share rates and reducing costs; fifthly, it makes it easier for the organisation to acquire loyal customers and to operate in new market areas; sixthly, it realises improvements in work efficiency and quality; seventhly, it manages the risks that may be encountered in a better way; eighthly, it leads government bodies, legal environments and the public to respect and value the opinions of the organisation. In addition to these benefits, corporate social responsibility enables organisations to create a difference in the market compared to their competitors, to achieve respectability and to have a good position in the eyes of the public. Furthermore, the campaigns and investments that organizations implement concerning social issues contribute to establishing sincere and genuine communication with their target audiences (Argüden, 2007:29).

Businesses organise corporate social responsibility activities on different issues in order to announce their sensitivity towards social problems and to have a good image in the eyes of the society. For these purposes, corporate social responsibility activities, which have an important place among public relations practices, are becoming more and more widespread (Kalender, 2008:35). In an intensely competitive market environment, organisations that want to differentiate from their competitors, acquire a distinctive place in the minds of their target audiences and draw a positive image achieve these goals through various corporate communication activities (Ürkmez, 2021:13). One of the studies carried out to achieve these goals is corporate social responsibility activities.

As a result of these long-term benefits of corporate social responsibility, companies have the opportunity to achieve their main objectives more easily. Companies should take corporate social responsibility as a basis for all their decisions and actions and carefully evaluate the returns of these activities by creating a control system. Public institutions and organisations should also support these voluntary activities of companies by carrying out various encouraging and supportive activities (Seyitoğulları & Bilen, 2020: 203).

Governmental bodies in developing countries have an important duty to popularise corporate social responsibility works by businesses. Governmental bodies should guide businesses by offering various incentives, creating awareness, making it mandatory, showing voluntariness, or determining more flexible regulations that will improve corporate social responsibility works that will provide benefits for the society. Flexible regulations,

especially on these issues, direct businesses to adapt more to corporate social responsibility efforts. For example, tax exemption can be applied to businesses in developing countries in return for their monetary aid for education, environment, health and other social issues. From this point of view, corporate social responsibility activities should not only be considered as "philanthropy", but should also address environmental, legal, economic and social issues that will ensure the economic development and progress of developing countries (Wirba, 2023:23).

Creating a positive image for countries and ensuring its continuity is based on intensive labour and a long process. Therefore, countries take various applications in order to have a positive image both in their own regions and worldwide (Yavuz & Özüpek, 2022: 608). One of the prominent activities among these applications is corporate social responsibility. Countries attract the attention and sympathy of different communities with the corporate social responsibility works carried out either on their own behalf or by their organisations. Therefore, state authorities should encourage and support organisations in the dissemination of corporate social responsibility activities.

3. Dimensions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Carroll (1979) defined four dimensions of corporate social responsibility as "economic, legal, ethical and voluntary (optional) responsibility" in the evaluations on "what responsibilities" organisations should undertake. Although these dimensions are present in all organisations, from a historical perspective, it has been determined that "economic responsibility" and then "legal responsibility" came to the forefront, while "ethical and voluntary (optional) responsibility" gained importance in the following periods. These four dimensions of corporate social responsibility guide researchers on which category to evaluate the social responsibility activities of organisations (Carroll, 1979: 499-500).

Economic Responsibility: Companies constitute one of the most important building stones of a country's economy. Therefore, the first and foremost responsibility of companies is their economic responsibility due to their purpose and structure. The most basic objective of companies operating in different fields is to produce qualified products or services that can meet the demands and needs of societies and to market them in a way that can generate profit. This basic objective covers the economic responsibilities of companies and all other activities are carried out within the framework of this responsibility (Carroll, 1979: 500). According to Öztürk

(2013: 20), the survival of businesses as living organisms is directly proportional to their profitable activities. Therefore, economic responsibility is one of the most fundamental responsibilities that businesses should undertake.

The economic responsibilities that businesses should undertake include the following (Carroll, 1991:40);

1. To perform consistently in such a way as to increase shareholders' earnings per share,

2. To focus on being as profitable as possible,

3. To preserve a strong competitive position in the market,

4. To ensure a high level of work efficiency in the working environment,

5. To evaluate a successfully operating business as a business that continuously generates profit.

Legal Responsibility: Legal responsibility means that businesses act in accordance with the legislation and regulations put forward by law-making and regulatory organisations (Özkol et al., 2005:136). In another definition, legal responsibility is defined as the organisation's declaration that it produces its products in accordance with the law, reporting its working efficiency in a realistic manner, not discriminating in recruitment processes and salary payments of employees, and complying with all regulations regarding the environment. Among these legal responsibilities; the first one provides significant benefits to consumers, the second one to entrepreneurs who invest in the organisation, the third one to the staff of the organisation and the fourth one to other target groups of the organisation (Maignan & Ferrell, 2001: 461).

The legal responsibilities that businesses must undertake include the following (Carroll, 1991:40);

1. To act in accordance with the demands of government bodies and legal organisations,

2. To comply with various regional and local regulations,

3. To be a corporate citizen who respects legal regulations,

4.To evaluate a successfully operating business as a business that fulfils its legal responsibilities,

5. To produce products and provide services that meet minimum legal obligations.

Ethical Responsibility: Ethical responsibility includes a number of activities and behaviours that are not regulated by law but are demanded

from organisations by individuals who are members of society. Not clearly expressing ethical responsibility has turned this responsibility into one of the most difficult responsibilities that organisations have difficulty in complying with. Although ethical responsibility has been clearly defined recently, discussions on "what is ethical and what is not ethical" continue in business circles. At this point, ethical responsibility covers the expectations of society from organisations far beyond legal obligations (Carroll, 1979: 500). According to Vural and Çoşkun (2011: 73), ethical responsibility is not to take actions that will harm the target groups with which businesses maintain business relations and the social environment in which they operate. As a requirement of their ethical responsibilities, businesses take various actions that will meet the expectations of the public, while avoiding actions that they will not tolerate.

The ethical responsibilities that businesses should undertake include the following (Carroll, 1991:41);

1. To act in accordance with the demands of societies regarding their traditions and ethical norms,

2. To adopt and respect ethical norms that are accepted by society, emerging or developed,

3. Not to compromise ethical norms to achieve the objectives of the organisation,

4. To consider good corporate citizenship as fulfilling what is ethically and morally demanded,

5. To accept that for the organisation, behaving with honesty and acting in accordance with ethical principles goes beyond simply complying with legal requirements.

Voluntary (Optional) Responsibility: Voluntary (optional) responsibility, also called philanthropic responsibility in some studies, includes the financial and moral assistance made by an organization for the purpose of improving the welfare and life of the public (Özkol et al., 2005:136). Voluntary responsibility consists of activities that contribute to the evaluation of the organization as a good corporate citizen in the social environment and at the same time strengthen the positive impressions created by the organization on the public. Organizations using a certain portion of their revenues for "education, art, health, environment, culture and other social activities" are constitute examples of voluntary social responsibility activities (Torlak, 2013:38).

The voluntary responsibilities that businesses should undertake include the following (Carroll, 1991:41);

1. To act in accordance with the philanthropic expectations of societies,

2. To support activities in the field of performing arts and fine arts,

3. Participation of business management and staff in regional events based on philanthropy and volunteering,

4. To provide assistance for the education of private and public schools,

5. Voluntarily supporting various projects carried out to improve the "living standards" of any social group.

While "economic and legal responsibilities" performed by organizations refer to obligatory responsibilities, "ethical responsibilities" refer to responsibilities that do not carry any obligation but are performed in line with the demands of the public. The increasing sensitivities on various issues have caused the public to demand that organizations be responsible for their every behavior and act in accordance with ethical principles in all their activities (Cingöz & Akdoğan, 2012: 335). As a result of their voluntary responsibility works, companies do not make any demands from the society. Because companies organize "voluntary responsibility" activities in order to benefit and contribute to the society with which they maintain business relations rather than themselves. However, some companies organize voluntary responsibility activities in order to get a discount on the taxes they pay (Çalışkan & Ünüsan, 2011: 157-158).

It is not a correct approach in terms of business ethics for companies to make voluntary responsibility activities in line with their own interests. The priority in voluntary responsibility is to look out for the benefit of society. In line with the modern management approach, there are "economic, legal, ethical and voluntary" responsibilities that every organization must fulfill. Of these, "economic and legal responsibility" is compulsory, while "ethical and voluntary responsibility" is carried out for the expectations of the public and for their benefit.

Apart from the four dimensions of corporate social responsibility listed above (economic, legal, ethical and voluntary responsibility), there are also various areas of responsibility that are concerning organizations. These are as follows (Aktan, 2013: 155);

- Responsibility towards employees,
- Responsibility towards the clients (consumers),
- Responsibility to shareholders,
- Responsibility towards nature and the environment,
- Responsibility to the state,

- Responsibility towards suppliers,
- Responsibility towards competitors,
- Responsibility to society.

4. Types of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility activities constitute one of the important public relations activities carried out by an organization to achieve its social goals. There are several reasons for organizations that provide support for these activities. The most common ones are as follows (Kotler & Lee, 2005: 3-4);

- Public Health (AIDS prevention activities, early diagnoses for breast cancer, timely vaccinations for various diseases).

- Public Safety (implementation of specific driver programs, prevention of crimes in the community, enforcement of safety restrictions on cars for safe use).

- Education (activities to increase literacy rates in the community, support for computers for education in schools, activities to support the education of children with special needs).

- Employment (trainings for employees in business areas, various practices in staff recruitment processes, activities in terms of the location of businesses).

- Environment (dissemination of recycling activities, elimination of chemicals that will harm the environment, activities to reduce the packaging used during production).

- Social and Economic Development (activities to expand housing loans with low interest rates).

- Basic Human Needs and Desires (actions to combat hunger, prevent homelessness, observe the voting rights of individuals, prevent discrimination between individuals).

Firms in a competitive market environment intensively turn to social responsibility activities for purposes such as creating a positive impression in internal and external target groups, protecting their position in the market and informing all stakeholders that they are a socially responsible organization in accordance with the responsibility that society has imposed on them.

Responsibility Related to Public Health: The number of social responsibility activities related to health has increased following the worldwide diseases and especially the Covid-19 pandemic. Every organization is

responsible for doing its part in the process of creating a healthy society. Because organizations can only maintain their existence in a society consisting of healthy individuals. According to Ateşoğlu and Türker (2010:212), the activities carried out by businesses for the health of their customers, employees and the public include health-related responsibilities.

Several activities are carried out in line with health-related responsibilities. Building hospitals and family health centers, making health equipment support to hospitals, helping individuals with health-related problems, activities related to the prevention of diabetes and the protection of heart health, giving up harmful habits and practices related to the early diagnosis of cancer diseases, and many other practices are examples of social responsibility activities that businesses carry out to protect public health (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 193-194).

Responsibility Related to Public Safety: Ensuring community safety is among the priority issues that require attention. When evaluated from this perspective, businesses that gain income from the products and services they sell to the society also have important duties.

Responsibilities related to community safety, also expressed as social marketing, generally include activities related to educating the public on maintaining the current functioning structure of society. The main objective is to positive alter the behavior of the public on a particular issue. Therefore, there is a requirement that the behavioral changes expected from the public should offer public or individual benefits. This responsibility is mostly performed by the public organizations such as the Ministry of Interior, the General Directorate of Security and the Ministry of Health, with various non-governmental organizations. Apart from these organizations, private companies operating in different fields also fulfill their responsibilities to ensure public safety (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 196).

Responsibility Related to Education: Another important responsibility of organisations against the society in which they operate is their responsibility regarding education. Responsibility related to education consists of activities carried out for the purpose of increasing the literacy rate and improving education in a society.

In regions that have not yet completed their regional development, education becomes an important need and society has higher expectations from organisations. In order to fulfil their responsibilities regarding education, organisations open schools, provide various aids to schools, carry out

some activities in schools for the development of children and organise trainings on issues of public importance (Torlak, 2013:43).

Social responsibility activities regarding education are increasingly becoming widespread among organisations. Organisations that draw attention to educational activities and support the education of their target masses and their school-going children fulfil their responsibilities for the public benefit and establish a good bond with their customers (Onaran et al., 2013: 134).

Responsibility Related to Employment: It becomes possible for individuals to sustain their lives by working in firms that provide job opportunities for them. Firms operating in various fields provide their personnel to improve themselves and get promoted by opening new workplaces, employing different personnel who are experts in their fields and organising trainings, thus fulfilling their social responsibilities towards both employment and their employees.

The expectations of societies towards employment have provided businesses to engage in social responsibility activities towards increasing employment. For this, businesses respond to the expectations of the society in this direction by opening various business areas and providing employment of qualified personnel in their field. Businesses that are aware of and fulfil their responsibilities regarding employment create a good perception and gain the interest of the society (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 201).

Responsibility Related to The Environment: Economic and humane activities have increased the struggle of societies for a livable environment. Individuals and various non-governmental organisations have compelled businesses to engage in environmentally friendly practices through their activities in both physical and digital environments. Environmental related problems constitute problems that can be overcome with the common sensitivities and initiatives of all organisations, regardless of the field in which they operate. At this point, everyone must fulfil their responsibilities. Because nothing has no meaning without a livable environment.

The Industrial Revolution has reproduced the number of mass production firms and increased the competition. In addition, firms have made profit making a priority for themselves and have ignored the damage they have created in the environment. As a result of this situation, the natural structure of the areas where the factories are located has been destroyed, pollution in soil, air and water has emerged, child labour has started to be employed, production has been carried out in unfavourable environments

in terms of health and factory wastes have greatly damaged the environment. These negative situations had a bad impact on the public's perspective towards the firms and exposed them to harsh criticism (Vural & Çoşkun, 2011: 64-65).

While the industrialisation processes offer positive advantages for businesses, they have had the opposite effect for the natural environment. Unconscious consumption of limited resources in nature, differences in climatic conditions, increasing global warming day by day and accordingly decreasing water levels, polluting the environment with wastes, etc. events have turned social life into an unlivable situation. Businesses have carried out a number of environmentalist activities in order to prevent the reflection of these negativities on their own activities and to protect their current image. One of them is the implementation of activities claiming that businesses are environmentally friendly and protect nature (Tarhan, 2011: 539).

The responsibilities of organisations towards the environment include the following topics (Uğur, 2019: 43);
- Protection of natural resources,
- To use energy in a way that ensures saving,
- Protection of water resources in nature,
- Efficient utilisation of raw materials,
- Applications related to waste disposal and waste management.

Responsibility Related to Social and Economic Development: Organisations carry out various social responsibility activities to ensure social and economic progress. This responsibility actually indicates a wider area of responsibility, including the responsibilities related to public safety, education, employment and the environment.

Every activity related to the improvement and renewal of cities, ensuring social welfare and eliminating poverty, eliminating unemployment, reducing the level of crime, protecting and respecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals can be considered within the social responsibilities of organisations. The responsibilities of organisations in relation to economic progress are mostly related to the job opportunities they provide for individuals. Therefore, every organisation that wants to continue its activities profitably offers new employment opportunities for the society (Ateşoğlu & Türker, 2010:211-212). According to Argüden (2007:28), it provides advantages for organisations to act together with

various businesses and non-governmental organisations while fulfilling their social responsibilities.

Responsibility Related to Basic Human Needs and Desires: In order for society in general and individuals in particular to sustain their lives, they need to meet their basic physiological needs and other needs. According to Kotler and Lee (2005:4), many activities such as fighting hunger and waterlessness, preventing homelessness, observing the voting rights of individuals, preventing situations that cause discrimination among individuals, etc. are among the responsibilities that businesses must fulfil in relation to basic human needs and desires.

The most basic needs of individuals in order to maintain their life functions are the needs related to eating, drinking water and shelter. Individuals who cannot meet any of these needs face serious problems. Businesses have a positive place in the minds and show the society that they are a socially responsible business by engaging in activities to meet these basic needs or by providing assistance for such activities. The activities related to the observance of the voting rights of individuals and the prevention of situations that cause discrimination among individuals constitute the needs necessary for the individuals of society to live together in mutual understanding rather than the maintenance of vital functions (Canöz & Canöz, 2020: 209).

5. Corporate Digital Responsibility (CDR) and Sample Practices

The digital age we are in has made it compulsory to reorganise public relations and its practices in a way to adapt to these environments. In this digital environment where everything changes every moment, public relations activities have also gained a digital dimension. Corporate social responsibility activities, which are of great importance among public relations activities, have also started to be carried out in digital environments in order to provide a great interaction. In particular the prevalence of hand-held technologies and the fact that individuals spend most of their time in online environments have paved the way for the frequent use of digital media environments in achieving the objectives determined within the framework of corporate social responsibility. At this point, corporate social responsibility activities carried out in the digital environment have been evaluated under a new nomenclature as "corporate digital responsibility".

The digital transformation and the fact that data technologies assume a major role in the daily lives of individuals have paved the way for public and private sector organisations to have an awareness regarding data res-

ponsibility in their activities in digital environments. In this extent, data responsibility in terms of organisations operating in the private sector has been evaluated in the context of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate digital responsibility (CDR), which has developed in connection with it (Van der Merwe & Al Achkar, 2022:2).

Developments in the internet and related technologies have made it necessary for organisations to adapt to these technologies and make innovations in their activities. These technological developments, which have an added value in terms of organisations, have brought along some difficulties in the process of adaptation. Organisations that want to combat these difficulties have emerged various systems in order to adapt themselves to the developing technology. With the intensive penetration of digitalisation into business life, corporate social responsibility activities, which undertake it as a duty to engage in some beneficial activities for society, have started to be called "corporate digital responsibility" in new media environments (Aydoğdu & Karsak, 2023: 38-39).

As consequence of the developments in the digital period; many businesses operating in different sectors have seen new communication technologies as a supporting factor of their activities and have popularised the use of these technologies. For them, this has created a great opportunity in commercial processes and an increase in productivity. However, in most of the academic studies to the current day, the concept of "corporate digital responsibility", which covers the responsibilities that should be undertaken for the use of these new communication technologies, has been given very little attention. The great part of business managers are generally know the dimensions of corporate social responsibility related to "economic, legal, environmental, ethical and philanthropic". The spread of digital technologies and the frequent use of these technologies by businesses require the definition of new areas of responsibility for digital environments (Wynn & Jones, 2023:1). At this point, the concept of corporate digital responsibility emerges.

Some responsibilities imposed on organisations regarding the adaptation of technological developments to business processes have led to the emergence of the phenomenon of corporate digital responsibility. Corporate digital responsibility needs to be defined and developed by academic circles because of the fact that it is a new concept that has recently become widespread (Bednarova & Serpeninova, 2023:3-4). "Corporate digital responsibility", which constitutes one of the concepts that we encounter as a result of digitalisation, is used to define the responsibilities of businesses

regarding the opportunities, threats and negative situations that may arise as a result of stepping into digital life (Herden et al., 2021: 13). According to Acar (2024: 497), the activities carried out by organisations to prevent certain risks they face in the stages of transition to digital are called corporate digital responsibility.

While the way corporate digital responsibility is implemented is the same as corporate social responsibility, the concept is considered as a part of corporate social responsibility activities. Accordingly, corporate digital responsibility is a collection of principles that are developed, implemented, controlled and voluntarily created by the organisations and have the ability to self-manage with various policies. A definition that takes a cynical view of corporate digital responsibility sees the concept as an activity that offers opportunities to create a cover for unethical behaviours and activities of organisations. In a definition that evaluates corporate digital responsibility from an optimistic perspective, the concept is defined as an event that aims to develop technology responsibly in an environment where serious practices do not exist. If a general definition is made on the axis of these evaluations, corporate digital responsibility consists of the practices, policies, strategies and governance structures determined by organisations with their entry into the digital transformation process. When considered from this perspective, corporate digital responsibility should be organised within the framework of "accountable digital practices, implementation mechanisms, sustainable growth and progress, and the promotion of trust across the digital ecosystem". The activities to be carried out in relation to corporate digital responsibility should include how the digitalisation process is shaping society and the environment and the effects of this situation on states, societies and individuals (Van der Merwe & Al Achkar, 2022: 4-5).

Ethical sensitivities have become widespread in the perspective of developments in the digital field and their ultimate consequences, and a new concept called 'corporate digital responsibility' has been defined. The phenomenon of corporate digital responsibility is based on the use of new communication technologies in line with a certain responsibility and sensitivity. At this point, corporate digital responsibility assumes a responsibility to increase the benefits provided by new communication technologies while eliminating the negativities related to ethical situations arising in the digital environment regarding the security and confidentiality of data, personal information and the use of artificial intelligence (Örs, 2023:179). According to Çalışkan (2022:273), the fact that organisations assume responsibility regarding the consequences of their work in digital environ-

ments and have the necessary awareness for this constitutes a distinctive feature of corporate digital responsibility.

Herden et al. (2021:17) defined corporate digital responsibilities starting from the dimensions of corporate social responsibility developed by Carroll (1991). These responsibilities are given in the table below.

Figure 1: Corporate Digital Responsibilities (CDRs)

Classical Understanding Corporate Social Responsibilities	Corporate Social Responsibilities In The Digital Era
Philanthropic Responsibilities: Being a good corporate citizen. (Desirable by society)	**For Example:** Making a commitment to sharing knowledge and using data and new technologies in a way that enables sustainable development; financing digital social innovation
Ethical Responsibilities: Doing what is fair and right, avoiding doing harm (Expected by society)	**For Example:** Responsible artificial intelligence or sustainable disposal of electronic waste, etc. following ethical digital practices and acting in an honest, fair and equitable manner beyond legal frameworks and governance.
Legal Responsibilities: Comply with laws and regulations. (Required by society)	**For Example:** Complying with existing laws and regulations related to digital technologies and data security (e.g. the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the EU)
Economic Responsibilities: Being profitable. (Required by society)	**For Example:** Predicting and developing innovative business models that assure the company's survival in the face of new competitive pressures in the digital world.

Source: Herden et al., (2021). 'Corporate Digital Responsibility' New Corporate Responsibilities In The Digital Age., p.17.

In the table in Figure 1; Herden et al. (2021:17) explained corporate digital responsibilities corresponding to each dimension of corporate social responsibility (philanthropic (voluntary), ethical, legal and economic responsibilities) in the classical definition.

For the purpose of providing a better understanding of the concept, Herden et al. (2021) also made a triple classification as 'environmental, social and governance' regarding the issues that corporate digital responsi-

bility should cover. According to this classification, corporate digital responsibility covers the following issues (Herden et al., 2021: 18-23);

1. Environmental Corporate Digital Responsibility: Energy and carbon footprint, digital waste.

2.Social Corporate Digital Responsibility: Digital compliance, digital impact, digital welfare, digital empowerment, socially compatible automation, neutral AI, digital self, digital participation, digital surveillance, digital freedom.

3.Corporate Digital Responsibility in Governance: Reliability of systems, data transparency, data collection and storage, data ownership and privacy, data responsibility and governance, data security, data use and accessibility, robot ethics.

Innovation and digitalisation are emerging as important factors for the realisation of sustainability activities in society. The digitalisation of business processes and practices has enabled the expansion of corporate social responsibility activities related to 'environmental, social and governance' to include digital. This perspective shows that activities related to 'environmental, social and governance' are affected by digitalisation processes and leads to the development of a new understanding of sustainability. For this reason, many researchers claim that corporate social responsibility and corporate digital responsibility are interrelated (Bednarova & Serpeninova, 2023:5). With the emergence of new media, communication activities have undergone a major change. As a consequence, public relations activities and, more specifically, the communication events of corporate social responsibility activities have also been exposed to various changes. The basic measures such as 'trust, reputation, image and recommendation', which come to the fore in the process of ensuring participation in corporate social responsibility activities, are of great importance in terms of ensuring voluntary participation of individuals in these activities. In this direction, thanks to the advantages of new media environments, businesses can easily implement corporate digital responsibility activities in which their target audiences will ensure active participation (Peltekoğlu & Tozlu, 2018: 289).

The unabated advancement of technology has made two-way communication with target audiences widespread. These developments have had positive reflections on corporate social responsibility activities. In particular, the observed increase in the number of users of social media applications and the active role of individuals in these virtual networks have provi-

ded significant gains for organisations to share their social responsibility activities with the public and to continue their corporate digital responsibility works through these virtual applications. So fact that organisations carry out effective corporate digital responsibility activities through virtual channels with the aim of keeping their profit-making goals and public demands in balance (Işık & Toprak, 2021: 905). The widespread use of digital technologies has directed organisations to virtual network environments to carry out communication activities. In this direction, organisations have effectively used websites, e-mail applications, mobile applications and social media accounts on behalf of achieving their communication targets. New media, which offers an environment where regional boundaries are overcome, all communication activities can be carried out instantly and mutual feedback is received from users, is an important medium in terms of reaching the targeted audiences and creating the expected impact of corporate digital responsibility activities (Süllü, 2019: 257).

Even though businesses having social responsibility consciousness use traditional media in the process of dealing with the problems of the society in which they are involved, they have started to use digital media widely with the emergence of the new media era. Mobile technologies, which are expressed as handheld technologies and provide the opportunity to access the internet anytime and anywhere, are of great importance in the successful implementation and sustainability of corporate digital responsibility activities. Because reaching young generations who have opened their eyes to an era in which the internet exists is only possible with successful social responsibility campaigns based on a good communication strategy in digital media (Alptekin, 2020: 138-139). Today, many organisations share their corporate social responsibility campaigns with the public through social media applications and these campaigns are viewed by individuals who actively use social media applications on a daily basis. Thanks to these campaigns published on social media platforms, organisations ensure the support of the public, contribute to the creation of awareness on social problems and thus develop a strong and sincere relationship with the public. At this point, it is of great importance for organisations to carry out corporate digital responsibility activities through social media applications and to be able to come together with them on a common ground by ensuring the participation of the public in these activities (Ayaz & İlhan, 2022:75-76).

The widespread use of the internet worldwide has ensured the intensive use of various technologies such as automation and artificial intelligence

in business processes. Apart from profitability and productivity increases, digital technologies also have significant contributions to support sustainable development in the event that businesses take responsibility and give assurance for this. Although these developments offer some positive benefits such as increased productivity, they also bring to the surface various concerns regarding human rights, privacy and protection of personal data. The recording and processing of a large number of information in databases in virtual environments and the use of artificial intelligence applications in decision-making processes increase these concerns. Therefore, businesses should take into account democratic rights and values and consider ethical situations during digitalisation activities (Bednarova & Serpeninova, 2023: 1).

Within the scope of digital public relations, corporate digital responsibility campaigns are organised by various organisations and brands regarding different issues. In terms of a better understanding of the subject, a few examples are given below.

Example 1: Turkish Economy Bank (TEB) Women's Banking, Women with TEB-#ElAlemNeDer Project

Source: https://www.ttboom.com/yaratici-dijital-projeler/

Turkey Economy Bank (TEB) Women's Banking, in collaboration with its digital agency Tick Tock Boom, carried out a digital campaign related to World Women's Day on 8 March. Within the scope of the campaign, it was stated that one of the biggest obstacles in front of women entering busi-

ness life is the prejudices of others, and this situation was emphasised with the hashtag #ElAlemNeDer in the published advertisement. In this campaign, which was realised in partnership with the brand agency, the brand draws attention to the importance and value of women in business life by stating that women should focus on their own dreams without thinking about what others say on the road to success. At the same time, with this digital campaign, the brand wanted to eliminate prejudices related to women's business life and created a social awareness (https://www.ttboom.com/yaratici-dijital-projeler/).

Example 2: Turkey Economy Bank (TEB) Women's Banking, Women with TEB: Success Has No Gender Project

Source: https://www.ttboom.com/yaratici-dijital-projeler/

Turkey Economy Bank (TEB) Women's Banking, in collaboration with its digital agency Tick Tock Boom, carried out another digital campaign related to World Women's Day on 8 March. In the campaign, it was expressed that women can easily overcome all kinds of difficulties they experience in business processes and that they can achieve anything they want. With this campaign carried out in partnership with the brand agency, the brand said that it stands by and supports women against the criticisms made regarding the success of women in society and emphasised

this with the slogan 'Success Has No Gender' in the advertisement it published.

By realising these two successful corporate digital responsibility campaigns, TEB Women's Banking has stand by women who want to enter the working life in their struggles against the pressure of the society and ensured that they are made awareness of the fact that they can achieve anything they want (https://www.ttboom.com /yaratici-dijital-projeler/).

Example 3: Turkish Airlines (THY), Digital Cabin Management System Project

Source: https://www.aa.com.tr/

Turkish Airlines (THY) distributed tablets to its employees within the scope of the corporate digital responsibility project called as Digital Cabin Management System. With this project, the brand has prevented the use of paper in aircraft cabins and ensured that employees perform all their processes in the cabin on tablets. With this project realised at the point of adapting to technology, Turkish Airlines (THY) has carried out an important environmentally friendly campaign that provides savings in both paper and time use (https://www.aa.com.tr/).

Example 4: Arçelik, Pepee TV Project

Source: https://www.arcelikglobal.com/

Within the scope of the corporate digital responsibility project carried out jointly with Düşyeri, Arçelik brand collaborated with Pepee TV, the first digital children's television in our country. In this project implemented within the scope of sustainability works, the brand prepared educational content through cartoons to make children and their families be aware of issues such as 'protecting the environment, ensuring energy saving and climate changes'. By implementing this project, Arçelik has realised an effective campaign regarding sustainability by ensuring the creation of environmental awareness in children (https://www.arcelikglobal.com/).

Example 5: TEKNOSA, Technology Project for Women

Source: https://www.teknosa.com

With the 'Technology Project for Women' carried out in cooperation with Habitat Association for ensuring gender equality in the society, Tek-

nosa organised digital literacy trainings for women who have difficulty in using the internet and related technologies in our country and thus gave messages showing that it is on their side. In addition to training on how to use computers, the project also provided women with training regarding social media applications, online services, safe use of the internet and the use of mobile phones. At the same time, physical workshop activities were also organised within the scope of the project for improving women's technological skills in various subjects. By carrying out this corporate digital responsibility work, Teknosa prevented women from lagging behind technological developments, and thus, signed a successful campaign (https://www.teknosa.com/).

Example 6: TEKNOSA; Technology for Women, Solidarity Project for All

Source: https://www.teknosa.com

Teknosa, in cooperation with the Sabancı Foundation and the Federation of Women's Associations of Turkey, realised the 'Technology for Women, Solidarity for All' project. Within the scope of this project, the brand provided smartphones to women who have been exposed to violence in order to announce the violence they have experienced. In this direction, the brand purchased second-hand smartphones for the project, undertook their maintenance and sent these phones to women who were exposed to violence through the Federation of Women's Associations of Turkey. By doing this successful corporate social responsibility campaign, the brand has carried out an impressive campaign by being the voice of women who are aggrieved by the recent cases of violence experienced against women and who cannot make their voices heard (https://www.teknosa.com/).

Conclusion

The development of the internet and connected technologies day by day has provided Web 2.0 technologies that enable two-way communication to enter our lives. These new media environments, where even an ordinary citizen can very easily create content, have turned into an important medium for organisations to reach the targets and customers they have de-

termined. Public relations activities, which have a major role in the publicity of the organisation and the relations they establish with their target audiences, have experienced various transformations and developments in the way of adapting to the digital age. As a ultimate result of this, a new phenomenon called 'digital public relations' has come to the agenda. Digital public relations expresses that organisations, brands or businesses carry out their public relations activities in new media environments and move their activities to these environments.

Many phenomena such as globalization, urbanization, modern lifestyles, increase in the number of conscious consumers, competition in the market and developments in internet technologies have brought to the forefront the fact that today's institutions and organizations should act with a sense of "responsibility" and act more "carefully" while carrying out their activities. Organisations that are obliged to meet consumer demands and a variety of responsibilities that they must undertake in the process of meeting these demands and needs. These responsibilities are defined as 'corporate social responsibility' in the literature. Corporate social responsibility activities are one of the important public relations practices that gain added value to the organisation. Corporate social responsibility includes the responsibilities that any organisation must fulfil in order to turn the society in which it is located into a more livable area in issues such as 'education, art, environment, health and pollution'. One of the most primary responsibilities that every organisation that sees and defines itself as a socially responsible organisation in the modern era must fulfil is 'corporate social responsibility'.

Organisations that want to create a positive perception and a good image in the eyes of the society have started to implement their corporate social responsibility campaigns in digital environments with the penetration of digitalisation into all areas of life and individuals spending most of their daily lives in virtual network environments. As in public relations and other practices, corporate social responsibility activities have been evaluated under a new nomenclature as 'corporate digital responsibility' in new media environments. Corporate digital responsibility is a concept used to define the awareness of organisations regarding the various opportunities and threats they may encounter in these environments as a result of their active use of new media environments and the responsibilities they should undertake. In fact, the unique texture of new media environments requires careful steps to be taken in the process of implementing corporate digital responsibilities. Corporate digital responsibility activities reach more indi-

viduals and obtain more visibility than traditional corporate social responsibility activities. At the same time, the impact of the cost factor, which constitutes one of the biggest obstacles in the process of implementing corporate social responsibility activities, is reduced thanks to the campaigns carried out digitally and paves the way for a large number of organisations to engage in corporate digital responsibility activities. The examples given in the chapter are proof of the prevalence of corporate digital responsibility campaigns.

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LOBBYING IN DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

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"Lobbying, the art of informing and persuading, resonates in virtual environments with digital public relations."

Introduction

Lobbying is a set of activities undertaken by particular interest groups to influence government decisions, shape public opinion and gain legitimacy. Lobbyists seek to achieve their goals through methods such as providing information, persuasion and political support. Lobbying in digital public relations (PR) is an attempt to achieve these goals through digital platforms.

Digital lobbying is a strategy that uses digital platforms to influence government policy and legislation. It is used in most countries as an effective tool to achieve important goals such as communicating with legislators and shaping public opinion. With lobbying activities conducted through digital platforms, access to target audiences has become easier, and the activities carried out have become more traceable and understandable. In this direction, the study will explain the concept of lobbying, lobbying methods, the transformation of lobbying activities from traditional to digital and lobbying activities in digital PR.

Lobbying

Lobbying has existed in various forms throughout history. Origins of lobbying in the modern sense date back to the 19th century. The origins of the term lobbying can be traced back to the Greek and Roman forums. Both senators and plebeians would try to influence for or against the daily issues discussed in the forums. The Magna Carta of 1215, signed by barons lobbying King John of England, is one of the earliest examples of lobbying. Today, the lobbying industry is often criticised, particularly because of allegations of corruption. Therefore, various regulations and codes of ethics have been developed to ensure transparency and accountability of lobbying activities. Lobbying is regulated in different ways in different countries. While the United States of America (US) has strict regulations and manda-

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tory registration systems, the European Union (EU) has a registration system and incentives that vary from country to country. In the United Kingdom (UK), the lobbying industry is self-regulated. Although lobbying often has a negative public image, it plays an important role in the functioning of democratic processes (Zetter, 2008: 6-11).

Although the exact start of lobbying is uncertain, it is known that it became more organised and recorded in the 1500s and 1600s. By the mid-1800s, groups representing socio-economic interests were widespread, and by 1850-1860, a modern system of interest groups had emerged in both the UK and the US. The first major wave of lobbying expansion took place between 1890 and 1910, with significant growth since the 1980s. Tactics developed almost 200 years ago, such as direct advocacy, coalitions, grassroots campaigns, policy expertise, and electoral participation, are still used today. While the means of communication have changed significantly, the fundamentals of influencing public policy have remained the same (McGrath, 2022: 481).

Lobbying is defined as an activity that involves attempts to influence, directly or indirectly, public power. These attempts can take place in the process of creating, implementing, or interpreting laws, standards, regulations, and decisions. Lobbying has the potential to improve the competitiveness of companies and, thus, of countries. This can be achieved by harmonising the relationship between the state and the private sector, clearly defining programs, and, above all, ensuring transparency. Lobbying serves this purpose by providing better foresight, information, and management (Farnel, 1994: 20). Lobbies engage in various activities to influence and direct political processes at both national and international levels that are in line with their own interests. For this purpose, they can both form groups consisting of representatives of their own countries and try to influence the governments of target countries through lobbying firms (Geçikli, 2016: 184).

Lobbyists influence lawmakers in their own or other countries in accordance with their interests and put pressure on them to adopt or reject legislation. To do this, they carry out organised activities using a variety of methods through officials, representatives, or other lobbyists with whom they work in partnership. Lobbyists try to influence decision-makers by using various methods such as propaganda, PR, advertising, participation in social events as well as communication techniques to achieve the goals of the parties they represent (Canöz, 2003: 24). Lobbyists can be effective thanks to their familiarity with legislative and executive processes and

their legal knowledge. In this way, they try to both meet the demands of interest groups within the country and defend the country's interests on international platforms (Aslan, 2015: 5).

Lobbying is a high-status and strategically important PR specialism. It is seen as an area of PR practice that attracts a high level of academic and public interest due to its perceived role in supporting institutional power and its impact on the functional legitimacy of democratic institutions (Davidson, 2015: 615). Although lobbying as a profession has gained acceptance in many countries and organisations, particularly in the EU and the US, the term "lobbying" itself is often misunderstood and, in some cases, even associated with corruption or quasi-legal interference in decision-making. Today, lobbying is recognised in business and politics as a professional activity that promotes the ideas and interests of different organisations and companies to specific individuals and, in some cases, politicians, and is increasingly becoming an essential part of democratic decision-making processes at all levels (Jugo et al., 2015: 19). At this point, it is necessary to pay attention to the following issues in order to conduct lobbying on a more ethical and democratic basis within the scope of PR (van Schendelen, 2013):

- *Strengthening transparency:* Increasing the transparency of lobbying activities requires the disclosure of information such as who interest groups represent, what policy areas they are active in, and how much they spend on lobbying. In this way, public scrutiny of lobbying activities can be strengthened, and the public can be better informed about these activities.

- *Accountability:* Unethical behaviour can be prevented by introducing stricter accountability mechanisms for lobbyists. These mechanisms may include stricter enforcement of existing rules and the introduction of dissuasive sanctions.

- *Preventing conflicts of interest:* Stricter rules and regulations should be introduced to prevent conflicts of interest. Public officials should be more cautious in their dealings with lobbyists, and potential conflicts of interest should be identified and prevented in advance.

- *Public interest:* The public interest should always prevail in lobbying activities. Lobbyists are expected to consider not only the interests they represent but also the wider interests of society.

- *Training and awareness:* Training and awareness programmes on ethical lobbying practices should be organised for public officials and

the public. These programmes can help to make lobbying more ethical and transparent.

- *Participatory decision-making:* Ensuring broader participation in decision-making processes facilitates taking and evaluating the opinions of different interest groups. As a result, decision-making can be more democratic, and the decisions taken have greater legitimacy.

- *Independent audit:* Audit and monitoring of lobbying activities by independent organisations increases transparency and accountability. This is important to ensure that lobbying activities are carried out in the public interest.

Lobbyists can play various roles, such as providing information, shaping public opinion, and managing legal processes. In addition, lobbying not only influences government officials but also aims to inform and guide public opinion (Nownes, 2006). As part of today's PR specialisation, lobbying involves systematic and long-term communication activities aimed at influencing political decision-makers or manipulators by pursuing the interests of businesses. These activities are carried out in order to achieve desired changes in political issues or to prevent possible changes (Babür Tosun, 2003: 361). The public perception of lobbying is closely related to democratic values and moral norms of society. This perception is also influenced by the image of the business circles conducting lobbying activities. Therefore, lobbying can sometimes be perceived as questionable attempts to influence government decisions in order to protect private interests (Farnel, 1994: 80). Lobbying is a set of methods and techniques that, when successful, can sway public opinion and decision-making toward the interests of the lobbyist or the organisation represented (Bovard, 2003: 3).

Lobbying Methods

Lobbying is an activity aimed at influencing decision-makers and is currently divided into two main categories: traditional lobbying and digital lobbying. While traditional lobbying is based on more direct and personal interactions, digital lobbying aims to reach a wider audience through the Internet and social media. In this context, after explaining traditional and digital lobbying methods, the transformation of traditional lobbying into digital lobbying will be discussed.

Traditional Lobbying

Traditional lobbying is characterised by face-to-face interaction, personal relationships, and the use of direct communication channels. Credibility, reputation, and personal relationships are particularly important in traditional lobbying. While there are different methods shaped according to the specific needs of various sectors and interest groups, three traditional lobbying methods stand out the most.

- *Direct lobbying:* It is the method of communicating directly with decision-makers (e.g., members of parliament, ministers, and bureaucrats) by organising or participating in face-to-face meetings, meetings, and events (Sezgin, 2002: 755). In this method, lobbyists try to influence decision-makers by conveying the interests they advocate directly to them. For example, they hold direct meetings with members of parliament (MPs) and try to get them to support or oppose certain legislative proposals. They present their views in committee appearances and try to persuade politicians on specific issues by informing them through official correspondence.
- *Grassroots lobbying:* Indirect lobbying communications that seek to influence legislation by attempting to influence the views of the general public (Raffa, 2000: 10). It is a method of putting pressure on decision-makers by mobilising the target audience (e.g. voters, consumers) (Geçikli, 2016: 192). In this method, lobbyists ensure that their messages are conveyed to decision-makers by informing, organising, and mobilising the target audience. By mobilising citizens, it is ensured that letters are sent to politicians or phone calls are made.
- *Astroturfing lobbying:* It is a method of creating fake grassroots movements on behalf of an external power, usually hidden or undisclosed, to influence public opinion (Walker, 2022: 51). Although similar to grassroots lobbying, the aim here is to make a movement that does not actually exist or represents a very small group appear to have a broad base. Therefore, this method is ethically controversial.

Traditional lobbying consists of attempts to influence legislation through a variety of methods. The main objectives are (1) to direct the recipient to contact a legislator or legislative staff member; (2) to provide the address, telephone number or similar information of a legislator or legislative staff member; (3) to provide the recipient with materials to con-

tact a legislator or legislative staff member or other government official or employee who may be involved in the formulation of legislation; and (4) to specifically identify one or more legislators who will vote on legislation that supports or opposes the organisation's position (Raffa, 2000: 10). In this vein, various PR campaigns can be organised to put pressure on decision-makers and ensure that decisions are taken in the desired direction, and events (such as media campaigns, press releases, social events) can be organised to attract public attention and build public opinion. In addition, joint lobbying strategies can be developed with groups with similar interests by forming coalitions.

Digital Lobbying

Digital lobbying is the strategy of interest groups to influence decision-making processes using the internet and digital platforms. It aims to create public opinion and reach decision-makers through tools such as online petitions, email communications, and social media interactions. By harnessing the power of digital technologies, this method can reach larger audiences than traditional lobbying methods, achieve faster results, and become more diversified every day. In this respect, four digital lobbying methods were designed (Gemini, 2024):

- *Social media-oriented lobbying:* It includes strategies to reach large masses and shape public opinion through the use of visual content, micro-impact articles and videos on social media platforms (X, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc.). It focuses on agenda-setting and awareness-raising through methods such as tagging decision-makers and organising hashtag campaigns.
- *Digital engagement and action-oriented lobbying:* This includes methods of sending mass messages to decision-makers and direct interaction by mobilising the target audience through email and online petition campaigns. This method encourages active citizen participation and provides grassroots support for lobbying activities.
- *Information-sharing and persuasion-oriented lobbying:* These include strategies for communicating directly with target audiences, sharing information and presenting persuasive arguments through websites, forums and blogs. These platforms provide comprehensive sources of information and discussion areas to support lobbying activities.
- *Big data and artificial intelligence support lobbying:* Big data analytics can be used to better understand the target audience, develop

strategies to influence decision-makers and measure the impact of lobbying activities. Artificial intelligence helps to create more effective and data-driven strategies. For example, methods such as search engine optimisation (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM) can be used to increase the visibility of content and reach audiences more effectively to exert pressure, particularly in legislative activities.

Digital lobbying is an innovative approach to PR and lobbying using digital tools. Digital tools such as knowledge management, open data analysis, and AI technologies are widely used by professionals in this field. With these tools, data from both internal and external sources can be analysed to develop more effective, transparent, and measurable PR, advocacy, and lobbying strategies (Carro & Di Mario, 2022: 387). Some studies on digital lobbying include Miller-Stevens & Gable (2013) on lobbying in the virtual world; Chalmers and Shotton (2016) on the extent to which organised interest groups adopt social media as a lobbying tool; and Taczanowska et al. (2023) on lobbying on social media as a new source of survey bias.

Traditional or digital lobbying can be carried out using different techniques and methods, but the main objective is to influence decision-makers. Therefore, attempts to influence private organisations, actions that do not aim to influence government decisions, and activities carried out by individuals on their own should not be considered as lobbying. This is because lobbying techniques are carried out in a planned and organised manner in order to influence government decisions as an activity involving intermediaries between citizens and decision-makers (Canöz, 2009: 159-160). Although lobbying methods have diversified with the spread of digitalisation and social media, the existence of an intermediary between citizens and decision-makers and the aim of influencing government decisions continue to be the prominent elements of lobbying.

Transformation of Lobbying from Traditional to Digital

Traditionally, lobbying has been seen as a behind-the-scenes effort by corporations and interest groups to communicate directly with legislators through lobbyists. Today, however, advances in communication technologies, increased expectations of transparency, and more active stakeholder engagement require lobbying in a more visible space. As companies are forced to be more open and accountable, issue management and lobbying processes have had to adapt to this new reality (Berg & Feldner, 2019:

270). The main differences between traditional and digital lobbying can be summarised as follows (Kuhn et al., 2023):

- *Tools:* While traditional lobbying relies on analogue tools, digital lobbying uses digital tools.
- *Networks:* While personal connections are important in traditional lobbying, social networks are at the forefront of digital lobbying.
- *Format:* Traditional lobbying usually takes place behind closed doors, whereas digital lobbying is public.
- *Conditions:* While trust is important in personal communication in traditional lobbying, transparency is essential in public communication in digital lobbying.
- *Value:* While information is important in traditional lobbying, access is important in digital lobbying.
- *Information flow:* In traditional lobbying, information flows from inside to outside, whereas in digital lobbying, it flows from outside to inside.
- *Actors and direction of communication:* Whereas in traditional lobbying, there is communication from lobbyists to policymakers, in digital lobbying, there is three-way communication between public opinion, policymakers and lobbyists.

Widner et al. (2020: 3), based on the traditional understanding of lobbying, divide lobbying activities into "inside (direct)" and "outside (indirect)" lobbying. Internal lobbying encompasses activities that aim to influence policymakers through direct communication with them. These activities include face-to-face meetings, campaign contributions, and building relationships with policymakers. External lobbying involves activities aimed at influencing policymakers indirectly. Protests, demonstrations, and media strategies to mobilise public opinion are examples of external lobbying. Moreover, when the reflections of internal and external lobbying types on digital lobbying are analysed, it is found that citizen groups use social media more actively and are more prone to external lobbying, whereas business and professional groups tend to use social media less and when they use lobbying, they prefer internal lobbying. In the study by Binderkrantz and Pedersen (2019: 75), it is found that business groups, in particular, are more involved in insider politics that influence public policy decisions, while citizen groups are more involved in outsider politics that influence agenda setting. This shows that the political influence of interest groups emerges in different ways.

Filiz and Sancar Demren (2023: 184), on the other hand, define grassroots lobbying activities as citizen-centred and bottom-up lobbying movements and astroturfing lobbying activities as campaigns that look like citizens but are directed by certain interest groups. With the transformation from traditional lobbying to digital lobbying, these activities have been found to reach target audiences more easily through social platforms. In this direction, it is seen that existing lobbying strategies are shaped in accordance with the post-truth era by adapting them to digital tools. For example, in a study by Olejnik (2024), the effectiveness of e-petitions in the United Kingdom was measured on the basis of grassroots lobbying, and it was found that among the e-petitions submitted to the House of Commons, those aiming to defend the status quo policy were more effective than those trying to change this policy, but e-petitions were not very effective in influencing the decision of the authorities. This suggests that the shift from traditional lobbying to digital lobbying, while utilising technological means, may not be sufficient to influence decision-makers. When looking at the reflections of astroturfing lobbying in the digital world (Walker, 2022: 52), sponsored social media posts, fake consumer web comments in favour of or against products, covert endorsement campaigns, manipulative political troll posts, and fake opinion leadership initiatives are among the prominent examples.

The differences between traditional and digital lobbying illustrate how digitalisation is transforming the lobbying process. Digital tools and social networks make lobbying more transparent, public and interactive. Information flows not only from lobbyists to decision-makers but also from the public to decision-makers and lobbyists. This allows the public to play a more active role in lobbying and to monitor lobbying activities by a wider audience.

Table 1. Comparing Traditional and Digital Lobbying

Description	Traditional Lobbying	Digital Lobbying
Communication Channels	Face-to-face meetings, meetings, events, phone calls, letters, traditional media	Social media, e-mail, websites, forums, blogs, online campaigns, artificial intelligence applications
Target Audience	Decision makers, media, civil society organisations	Decision-makers, media, civil society organisations, mass audiences
Impact Area	Limited	Wide
Cost	High	Low
Measurability	Difficult	Easy
Speed	Slowly	Fastly

The comparison between traditional and digital lobbying illustrates how rapid changes in communication technologies have affected lobbying. While traditional methods are characterised by face-to-face interaction and limited audience appeal, digital methods offer the advantages of reaching large audiences, rapid dissemination, and low cost. While the measurability and speed of digital lobbying can be an advantage, the potential of traditional methods for in-depth engagement and trust-building should not be underestimated. Therefore, an effective lobbying strategy should combine the strengths of both approaches to maintain direct communication with decision-makers and mobilise broad audiences.

Lobbying Activities in Digital Public Relations

When considering the concepts of lobbying and PR together, it can be stated that they both aim to understand their environment, build relationships with their environment and strengthen their reputation. For this reason, lobbying activities such as government relations and public affairs are generally considered PR activities (Thomlinson, 2016: 142). With the digital transformation and the rise of social networks, PR activities have evolved significantly. Traditional lobbying strategies have adapted to the digital age, becoming more transparent and focused on delivering messages in line with public opinion (Kuhn et al., 2023). Therefore, lobbying is no longer limited to traditional methods; it now includes how social movements, interest groups, and political parties use the media to mobilise public opinion and influence policymakers (Tresch & Fischer, 2015). The digital transformation, especially the use and prevalence of social media, has changed society. Politicians and political organisations increasingly use social media channels. The constant accessibility through smartphones and other devices has not only led to a greater exchange of information between political and public actors but also lobbyists, who traditionally communicate remotely, have started to respond to these changes and use Twitter, Facebook, and similar tools (Stürmer et al., 2023: 211). McNutt (2021: 264) outlines four processes for incorporating technology used in digital PR activities into lobbying practices, especially for non-profit organisations:

- *Topic research and information gathering:* Firstly, it is important to harness the power of the internet to gather and present information quickly. Lobbyists can review the vast amount of statistical data, primary and secondary sources, and opinion pieces available online

to help them build and evaluate their campaigns, making such research faster and less time-consuming than in the past.

- *Educating and informing the public:* The use of various new and traditional technologies makes it easier to reach, educate, and persuade people to take action on important issues. Tools such as blogs, websites, and online videos help lobbyists inform and mobilise audiences.
- *Coordination and organisation:* Email, messaging lists, blogs, wikis, and other related technologies help plan meetings, track task completion, and develop shared documents.
- *Applying pressure:* Technology can exert pressure on decision-makers directly (e.g., through email) or indirectly (e.g., by enabling citizens to communicate with decision-makers).

The use of technology in lobbying is a new practice that has emerged in the last thirty years or so. As new technologies emerge, lobbyists need to keep pace with these developments and choose the most appropriate technology for each task (McNutt, 2021: 272). The processes applied in digital PR activities are partly similar to the traditional processes of PR (research, planning, and implementation). At this point, lobbying in digital PR comes to the fore, in line with the objectives of interest groups, to create pressure policies to inform the public and provide interaction with the support of the public, such as running petition campaigns, posting on social media, publishing electronic bulletins, etc., in order to influence government decisions in the digital environment. Figenschou and Fredheim (2019) stated that interest groups use social media with four different forms of network-based advocacy:

- *Network-based information and awareness raising:* Posts are made to inform and raise awareness among target audiences. The content shared for this purpose usually includes news, research reports, and event announcements.
- *Network-based community building and dialogue:* It is used to engage with existing and potential supporters and build community. Interest groups use a variety of content such as personal stories, humor and contests to increase engagement.
- *Network-based mobilisation:* It is used by larger interest groups to organize campaigns for fundraising, recruiting and mobilizing supporters. Personal and interactive campaigns are considered more successful for these purposes.

- *Network-based lobbying:* It is used by interest groups with greater resources to reach and communicate directly with decision-makers. This is a middle-stage lobbying and PR activity that allows for both direct communication and for this communication to be seen by other elites.

Due to the transparency principle of PR, lobbying activities can be monitored more democratically by utilising digital technologies in the 21st century. For example, an analysis of the multi-layered nature and scope of lobbying activities in the US (Quist & Auble, 2022) shows that interest groups spent $7 billion in 2019 and 2020 to lobby the federal government to influence energy, health, infrastructure, communications, technology, insurance, and many other economic and governance issues. In 2021, lobbying expenditures in the states exceeded $1.8 billion. This shows that lobbying is used as an important tool to influence policy and legislation not only at the federal level but also at the state level. According to a report prepared by Cloutier et al. (2024), federal lobbying expenditures exceeded 1.2 billion dollars only in the first quarter of 2024. It is noteworthy that large technology companies also transfer significant amounts of funds to lobbying activities on the issues where the most expenditures are made. Technology giants such as Meta, Alphabet and ByteDance have spent millions of dollars lobbying in the US to influence federal policy on issues such as privacy, cybersecurity and artificial intelligence. Meta, for example, has lobbied against legislation to protect children on social media, while Alphabet has also tried to influence federal policy. China-based ByteDance, on the other hand, has significantly increased its lobbying spending due to increased scrutiny and pressure on its activities in the US through the TikTok application. However, despite these efforts, the US Congress passed a bill restricting TikTok's activities and imposed sanctions in April 2024. This situation shows that the lobbying efforts of technology companies are not always successful and that policy decisions can sometimes go against the interests of companies. It also shows that not only companies but also countries are engaged in a digital lobbying war.

In recent years, large US-based technology companies such as Facebook, Google and Amazon have stepped up their lobbying activities in the EU. Their lobbying spending in the EU has doubled in the last four years, reaching 50 per cent of the top 20 lobby spenders. One of the reasons for this situation is that the EU does not have a major technology giant in its own organisation. The only EU-based company in the top 20 is the Swe-

dish online music platform Spotify. The EU's efforts to regulate the digital economy are being hampered by the intense lobbying of these Silicon Valley-based companies. In particular, new regulations in areas such as digital services and artificial intelligence have become the focus of their lobbying. This suggests that lobbying on digital issues is the policy issue with the least diversity of stakeholders, concentrated in a handful of companies. Considering the potential negative effects of the relevant statistics on competition, innovation, and consumer rights, it is seen as a significant problem for the EU's digital future (Kergueno, 2018). Lobbying activities need to be better regulated and supervised to ensure transparency, accountability, and fair representation of all interest groups in the EU (van Schendelen, 2013: 313).

With the rise of digital technologies and social media, lobbying has become more complex. The definition of lobbying as "oral or written communication between a lobbyist and a public official to influence legislation, policy or administrative decisions", which is widely used in most countries, is no longer sufficient for lobbying. The mechanisms and channels of influence used in PR activities have diversified and have become more susceptible to various abuses. Government policies can increasingly be influenced by non-governmental organisations, research centres, and think tanks through the use of social media strategies to guide, manipulate, or change public perceptions. This can undermine trust in both governments and those influencing policy-making, especially corporations. Globally, only a small number of countries appear to address lobbying risks through transparency and integrity frameworks in their governance arrangements. Despite the risks to democratic processes and national security, only Australia, Canada, the US, and the EU appear to provide some transparency on the influence of foreign governments through lobbying (OECD, 2021). In this respect, the OECD has adopted a recommendation for all decision-makers in OECD and non-OECD countries to make lobbying activities more transparent within the scope of PR ethical principles. OECD Council Resolution OECD/LEGAL/0379 dated 18/02/2010 provides guidance on how to promote equal access to policy debates for all interested parties, how to increase transparency in lobbying, and how to foster a culture of integrity (OECD, 2010).

Table 2. OECD Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying

I. Building an effective and fair framework for openness and access

1. Countries should provide a level playing field by granting all stakeholders fair and equitable access to the development and implementation of public policies
2. Rules and guidelines on lobbying should address the governance concerns related to lobbying practices and respect the socio-political and administrative contexts.
3. Rules and guidelines on lobbying should be consistent with the wider policy and regulatory frameworks
4. Countries should clearly define the terms 'lobbying' and 'lobbyist' when they consider or develop rules and guidelines on lobbying.

II. Enhancing transparency

5. Countries should provide an adequate degree of transparency to ensure that public officials, citizens and businesses can obtain sufficient information on lobbying activities.
6. Countries should enable stakeholders – including civil society organisations, businesses, the media and the general public – to scrutinise lobbying activities

III. Fostering a culture of integrity

7. Countries should foster a culture of integrity in public organisations and decision-making by providing clear rules and guidelines of conduct for public officials.
8. Lobbyists should comply with standards of professionalism and transparency; they share responsibility for fostering a culture of transparency and integrity in lobbying.

IV. Mechanisms for effective implementation, compliance and review

9. Countries should involve key actors in implementing a coherent spectrum of strategies and practices to achieve compliance.
10. Countries should review the functioning of their rules and guidelines related to lobbying on a periodic basis and make necessary adjustments in light of experience.

Source: OECD (2010) and OECD (2021: 17)

While lobbyists and companies are increasingly under scrutiny, there is a need for a clearer integrity framework for participation in policy-making. Accordingly, the OECD Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying continue to be updated from time to time to reflect the evolving lobbying and influence landscape and to help actors in government, business, and civil society strengthen their transparency and integrity frameworks in policymaking. There is also a need for greater transparency on the use of social media as a lobbying tool. The Canadian Registry of Lobbyists[5] and

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[5] https://lobbycanada.gc.ca/app/secure/ocl/lrs/do/guest

the EU Transparency Register[6] are seen as exemplary frameworks that require lobbyists to disclose information on the use of social media and other PR campaigns as lobbying tools (OECD, 2021).

When analysing how lobbying is regulated in EU countries, it is observed that in some countries such as Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia, lobbyists are required to legally register their activities. In Spain, the Catalonia region imposes mandatory registration for lobbyists. In other countries, such as Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Romania, registration of lobbying activities is voluntary. However, these countries offer various advantages to encourage lobbyists to register. In countries such as Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Spain and Sweden, there is no legal regulation on lobbying. However, self-regulatory mechanisms have been established by the sectors in these countries (European Parliament, 2021). The EU is taking important steps to strengthen the transparency policy of the institutions. In line with the mandatory transparency register between the European Parliament, the Council of the EU and the European Commission, the European Parliament has introduced measures requiring lobbyists to register in order to appear on the Parliament's premises. Registration in the 'transparency register' is also mandatory for interest representatives wishing to meet with the Council, the Secretary-General or the Director-General (European Union, 2024). With the increasing role of digital tools in lobbying activities and the need for more transparent monitoring of these activities, all lobbies registered in the EU Transparency Register can be seen digitally. In addition, temporarily suspended lobbies are also included in a special list that appears on the website homepage[7]. In this respect, it can be observed that different methods are used across the European Union to regulate and ensure transparency of lobbying activities. While some countries have established mandatory registration systems, others encourage voluntary participation. Some countries even use self-regulatory mechanisms without any legal regulation. With the increasing role of digital tools in lobbying activities, there have been significant improvements in transparency.

Conclusion

Robust regulatory frameworks and transparency mechanisms are needed to ensure that lobbying contributes constructively to policy-making pro-

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[6] https://transparency-register.europa.eu/index_en
[7] https://transparency-register.europa.eu/list-suspended-registrants_en

cesses and promotes democratic integrity (Puranik et al., 2022: 31). A transparent, ethical and accountable approach to lobbying is necessary to gain public trust, act in the public interest and contribute to democratic processes. In this direction, the mechanism established by the European Union provides a good example of tracking lobbying activities in the digital environment and transparency.

The transformation of PR methods through digitalisation has had a particular impact on traditional lobbying, and the limits of traditional methods have been extended by social media-oriented opinion-forming activities, action-oriented lobbying with digital participation, information-sharing and persuasion-oriented lobbying, and lobbying supported by big data and artificial intelligence.

Although digital lobbying methods have advantages over traditional lobbying in terms of wider impact, lower costs, ease of measurement with advanced technological tools, personalisation, feedback and speed, traditional lobbying methods are still actively used, especially to put pressure on legislators. For instance, engaging in direct discussions with a member of parliament can be more effective in providing information and persuading than using emails or text messages However, the advantages of digital lobbying are underlined by the fact that the power of social media can be used to create public pressure with a wider public base. This situation shows that today, it is essential to support traditional lobbying methods with digital lobbying activities, and both may be necessary depending on the maturity of the conditions. Therefore, the adaptation of traditional methods and tools to digitalisation has become an indispensable element of democratic processes in lobbying activities aimed at influencing decision-making processes, acting within the framework of ethics and transparency, which are among the basic principles of PR.

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DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION

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Introduction

In the contemporary business environment, most companies, whether family-owned or corporate, endeavor to adopt a modern management approach. In such an environment, where competition is fierce and things will become even more complex with artificial intelligence, it would not have been possible to implement any other style.

The subject of management has manifested itself in a multitude of forms in a multitude of locations with the advent of writing. When it comes to management, it is sometimes understood as a process, sometimes as the elements that make up this process, and sometimes as a collection of knowledge that managers can use (Koçel, 2018, p. 89). The book "The Art of War", written 2500 years ago by the Chinese General Sun Tzu, focused mainly on how to manage armies and to some extent countries, while also focusing on a strategy to "win the war without fighting" (Tzu, 2014). Similarly, *The Republic*, written 2500 years ago by Plato, while revealing the critical points in the management of the state, also listed the qualities that should be found in the managers who will perform the act of management (Plato, 2020, p. 107).

Machiavelli, who wrote the book *The Prince* 500 years ago, makes governance a little more ruthless and states that remedies, including burning and destruction if necessary, can be produced to govern with an approach also called Machiavellianism (Machiavelli, 2020). Crisis management, which is the subject of this study, should be evaluated from the same perspective and should focus on the philosophy of defeating the crisis before it happens. One of the most important pillars of crisis management is crisis communication. Crisis communication constitutes one of the main subjects of public relations activities in businesses. The digitalization of public relations and the fact that an important part of this digitalization takes place through social media requires crisis communication management to

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be carried out largely through social media. In this study, crisis communication will be discussed within the framework of digital public relations, supported by some examples.

1. Transformation From Public Relations to Digital Public Relations

The Concept of Public Relations

The question of what public relations is can mean different things to different people. While some people see public relations as the customer representative of businesses, others see it as a consultant or marketing employee. There may even be those who go further and think of it as the line of business where mannequins work (Erdem & Akbaba Davulcu, 2020, p. 7). In contrast, Grunig defines public relations as a strategic management function that utilizes communication to develop relationships with the stakeholders of the organization (Okay & Okay, 2015, p. 4).

According to another definition, public relations is about reputation; it is the result of what you have done, what you have said and what others have said about you (cipr.co.uk, 2024). According to the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), public relations is "a decision-making management practice charged with creating relationships and interests between organizations and their target audiences based on the dissemination of information through credible and ethical communication methods" (ipra.org, 2023).

It is possible to explain the key concepts mentioned in the public relations definitions listed above as follows (cipr.co.uk, 2024):

- An 'organization' can be a government body, a business, a profession, a public service or a body concerned with health, culture, education, in fact any corporate or voluntary organization, large or small.
- The term 'public' refers to the target audience that is of significance to the organization in question. This may include existing and potential customers, employees and management, investors, members of the media, government officials, suppliers, and opinion formers.
- The concept of 'understanding' is a two-way process. For an organization to be effective, it is not sufficient to merely disseminate information; rather, it must also be receptive to the perspectives of those with whom it engages in business. In the context of today's

open society, it is no longer sufficient to merely disseminate propaganda.

Among these concepts, it is possible to see public relations as a business function that manages reliable, accurate, and sustainable relations with the target audience, which started to emerge in the early 20th century but whose origins date back thousands of years.

At the time of its emergence, public relations were primarily concerned with relations with the media and the creation of a positive image of the target audience. However, it has since incorporated a multitude of business functions. The functions of public relations are numerous and diverse, encompassing a wide range of activities. These include the creation of corporate publications, event management, the management of corporate image and reputation, the development of corporate identity, the facilitation of internal communication, the promotion of corporate social responsibility, the management of financial public relations, the planning and execution of corporate advertising, the management of crises, the engagement in lobbying activities, the management of marketing public relations, the coordination of international public relations initiatives, the facilitation of public diplomacy, and the management of social media.

The public relations function, which has been in operation since the early 1900s but only emerged in Turkey in the 1960s, has moved to the digital environment in parallel with the development in information technologies. Public relations that have moved to the digital environment are now called digital public relations.

Digital Public Relation Concept

As documented by the online encyclopedia Britannica (britannica.com, 2024), the internet, which first became available to the public in the 1970s, is now utilized in almost every field of human endeavor. From the sphere of education to the preparation of culinary dishes, the Internet has become a ubiquitous feature of contemporary life, offering a vast array of resources that facilitate human endeavors. These resources are accessed by vast numbers of people with the assistance of digital tools.

As of January 2024, the latest data indicates that 8 billion 8 million individuals are utilizing the Internet on a global scale. While 5 billion 610 million of these people use mobile phones, 5 billion 350 million of them are individual internet users. It is notable that approximately five billion and four million individuals, representing a significant proportion of the global population, engage with social media platforms. In 2023, the num-

ber of social media users increased by 5.6% compared to the previous year (wearesocial.com, 2024).

As of January 2024, there were 80,690,000 mobile phone connections and 74,410,000 internet users in Türkiye, according to official data. The number of active social media users is estimated to be 57.5 million (data-reportal.com, 2024). The primary reasons for utilizing the Internet in Turkey, as identified from the data, are to obtain information (73.20%), to follow news and events (67.60%), to research on products and brands (58.90%), to research how to do something (63.90%), and to communicate with friends and family (58.30%). In Türkiye, individuals who utilize information technologies dedicate seven hours and 24 minutes per day to the internet, three hours and 47 minutes to television, two hours and 54 minutes to social media, and one hour and 49 minutes to reading printed publications (guvenliweb.org.tr, 2023). Although it is feasible to establish an internet connection in a multitude of locations, as of August 2023, 95.5% of households had access to the Internet from their place of residence. The proportion of individuals who used the internet was 87.1%. The proportion of individuals engaged in the purchase or ordering of goods or services via the Internet has increased, reaching a rate of 49.5% (tuik.gov.tr, 2023).

As is the case with all fields, the advent of the Internet has brought about significant innovations in the domain of communication. These innovations arise in methods compared to the past, and old methods are adapted to internet environments again. Communication principles generally remain the same without major changes (Balta Peltekoglu & Demir Askeroglu, 2019).

It is widely acknowledged that the digital age has undergone a significant transformation, evolving from the initial Web 1.0 to the current Web 4.0. It is evident that the public relations sector has also been impacted by these changes and developments. These periods can be identified and delineated, spanning from Public Relations 1.0 to Public Relation 4.0.

The initial phase of public relations, designated PR 1.0, was characterized by a one-way communication model. During this period, public relations professionals were required to monitor a multitude of print media daily. Concurrently, public relations (PR) functioned as a publisher in the context of corporate communication. The advent of the Internet marked the beginning of PR 2.0, a period during which online media emerged, print media underwent a digital transformation, and PR evolved to facilitate horizontal communication and serve as a liaison between diverse

stakeholders. The third phase of public relations, which has been dubbed "PR 3.0," is characterized by the ascendance of social media. During this period, public relations professionals monitor both traditional and social media outlets for relevant news and developments. The fourth phase of public relations, which is currently emerging, will be characterized by the increasing influence of artificial intelligence and big data. In this era, public relations must compete with automated systems capable of writing publications and planning material uploads (Permatasari, Soelistiyowati, Suastami, & Johan, 2021) as cited in Arief 2019)

One of the most significant business functions, public relations, has also been significantly influenced by the advent of the internet, with a notable shift in many of its core activities towards the digital domain. It is possible to define digital public relations as a strategic approach that brings public relations activities to the internet environment. While most core activities remain consistent, the ability to reach a broader audience and the enhanced measurability of outcomes render digital public relations a more advantageous approach. The principal objectives of public relations in the digital environment can be listed as follows (Sayımer, 2012, p. 64):

a. To promote corporate identity, products, and services,
b. To develop business,
c. To sell more products and services online,
d. To gain the support of target audiences,
e. To establish interactive and healthy relationships with target audiences,
f. To create a rich data bank for social stakeholders.

One of the key public relations activities conducted in the virtual environment, particularly in the context of social media, is crisis communication. The Internet, which enables two-way communication rather than the one-way communication typical of Web 2.0, provides a significant advantage that allows the target audience to instantly reveal their feelings and thoughts. However, this advantage can also have negative consequences when the target audience shares their negative feelings and thoughts. Considering the risks associated with social media, it is imperative to exercise vigilance about crisis communication, which constitutes a core digital public relations activity.

2. Crisis and Crisis Communication

It is of great consequence to businesses that they can navigate crises effectively. In the event that crises are not addressed immediately or in an appropriate manner, they have the potential to result in significant and adverse consequences for the business. Such consequences may be detrimental, including the loss of life, financial resources, material assets, or the reputation of the business. Furthermore, market loss and a decline in stock market value can be included in this list. It is therefore evident that crises are vital processes for businesses. This section will initially focus on the key concepts of crisis, crisis management, and crisis communication. It will then proceed to examine the various sources and types of crises.

2.1. Crisis

In this section, firstly, the concept of crisis will be emphasized and then the characteristics and causes of crises will be revealed.

2.1.1. The Concept of Crisis

The increase in communication in parallel with the development of technology has made it possible to be informed from every corner of the world at any time, and an event occurring in South America can be learned within seconds in Türkiye, ten thousand kilometers away. Natural disasters, fires, diseases, or people's behaviors that are considered wrong have become known and talked about all over the world in a truly short time. Especially with the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected the entire world in 2020, the concept of crisis has led people and institutions to act more carefully about the crisis. In the Covid-19 pandemic, all sectors from the transportation to the accommodation sector, from production to the service sector have been affected by the pandemic and have started to take long-term and crisis measures.

The Turkish Language Association (TDK) explains the word crisis with six different meanings (TDK, 2021). These are.

a. (Medicine) Physiological disorder that occurs suddenly in an organ, disruption,

b. The feeling of depression in a person's life,

c. The scarcity of something,

d. A sudden and excessive desire for something,

e. Depression

f. A period of difficulty in a society or an organization in a country or between countries, depression, crisis.

In the context of contemporary business and public relations, the concept of crisis is more accurately aligned with the sixth definition. James Lukaszewski, who is also known as America's Crisis Guru, defines a crisis as "an event that stops people, stops production, stops promotion, causes loss of confidence and redefinition of a reputation resulting in victims and explosions" (Lukaszewski, 2020). The Cambridge Dictionary (2024) defines a crisis as:

a. A time of significant disagreement, confusion, or distress.
b. An extremely challenging or perilous juncture in a situation.
c. A period of significant difficulty, danger, or suffering.
d. The moment during a serious illness when there is a possibility of sudden improvement or deterioration.
e. A sudden loss of confidence.

From the issues listed above, it is possible to state the situations called crisis in businesses, which constitute the subject of our study, can be defined as circumstances that push the business into a difficult period, create distress, cause conflict or confusion, lead to losses that sometimes result in pain, disrupt all activities of the business, and result in a loss of trust and consequently reputation among the target audience. There are many reasons why crises have become more visible in recent years. These include rapid changes in technology, the prominence of electronic media as a source of news, the ability of electronic media to dramatize events more, the easy and increasing access of NGOs and activist organizations to the media, and the parallel impact on business (Gecikli, 2013, p. 231)..

A crisis can give rise to three interrelated threats. These are public safety, economic loss, and reputational damage (Coombs W. T., 2007, p. 1). To look at these briefly;

a. public safety can be defined as the threat to public safety that arises in the aftermath of a crisis. This threat consists of material effects that can harm people, such as radiation released into the environment, fires, or explosions following the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant explosion. It is also possible to add to these effects the effects that may come especially from social media and may cause panic in the public.

b. financial losses can be defined as the financial costs incurred by the business as a result of the crisis, including costs related to product recall, compensation, environmental damage, and treatment expenses, among others.

c. reputation can be understood as the prestige or reputation that a company or individual has with its target audience. In the event of a crisis, an enterprise may lose the reputation it has built up over years of operation in a relatively short period due to the incident that caused the crisis.

2.1.2. Characteristics of Crises

The existence of crises is an inherent feature of the global landscape. It is not possible to evade or circumvent a crisis. However, an understanding of the defining characteristics of crises can facilitate enhanced preparedness for such events. During periods of crisis, the prevalence of panic and the potential for misguided decision-making can impede the flow of information and cast doubt on the veracity of the data received. This can impede the ability to discern the situation accurately and complicate organizational decision-making processes.

It is evident that crises, whether occurring naturally or because of human error or negligence, share certain common characteristics. These common points can be enumerated as follows (Gecikli, 2013, p. 228):

a. The crisis occurs unexpectedly.

b. It renders the organization's detection and prevention systems ineffective.

c. Organization owners, managers, and employees are under pressure and tension.

d. It causes the image of the organization to be tarnished.

e. It threatens the organization's goals and even its existence.

However, the knowledge gained from each crisis contributes to the accumulation of experiences, enhancing humanity's preparedness for the necessary measures. Businesses can adopt a proactive approach by learning from the crises affecting their own operations or those of other businesses. This entails updating their crisis management plans, disseminating the updated plans to employees through meetings, conducting training sessions on the new plan, and other measures. Such actions can prevent new crises and minimize the impact of any eventual crisis.

2.1.3. Crisis Sources

In the contemporary era, crises can emerge in organizations for a multitude of reasons. However, with the advent of internet journalism and social media, such crises have become increasingly conspicuous. The following list delineates the principal sources of crises that give rise to significant challenges for businesses:

- Damages incurred in the company because of natural disasters (such as 2021 Rize flood in Türkiye).
- Fires, explosions, and accidents occurring in the company due to human error (such as 2020 Sakarya fireworks explosion in Türkiye).
- Social reactions due to internet posts (such as social media posts in favor of Israel).
- Arrest or detention of company executives (such as the arrest of Sam Bankman, Founder, and former Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the cryptocurrency exchange FTX).
- Defects arising from products and services (such as Dardanel's manual packaging images, despite complying with the legislation in Türkiye).
- Incidents that are indirectly associated with products and services (images of workers bathing in milk at a company supplying milk to large companies in Türkiye 2020).
- Attacks on products and services on social media (Danone e-mail smear campaign in 2005).
- Being included in the list of adulterated food production published by the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (such as Yudum Oils, Cebel Cheese)
- Transportation accidents caused by incorrect routes etc. as in the case of the State Railway.
- Reaction from the public due to environmental damage, being penalized by local authorities or the state.

In addition to the sources of crisis listed above, Gecikli added the following issues as events and situations that cause crisis (Gecikli, 2013, pp. 229-230):

a. Recalls of products due to malfunctions and negligence that may harm consumers,

b. Accidents involving nuclear, chemicals, etc,

c. Mass layoffs and the public reaction (such as the Tofas and Renault automobile factories, mass layoffs at the Konya Kentpar company - author's note),

d. Monetary penalties due to taxes, etc,

e. Blacklisting of businesses or products,

f. Fear of the possibility of transferring the business to another company (fear that the Foundation University will be closed and transferred to a state university -author's note),

g. Intentional product tampering or kidnapping, etc. (such as the kidnapping of the owner of the Heineken Company - author's note).

h. Creation of a negative public perception because of withholding information from the public,

i. Involving in inappropriate business and political events in another country.

Ozden (2011) distinguishes between two categories of causes of crisis: internal and external factors. External factors include economic factors, technological innovations, social factors, legal and political factors, factors arising from the international environment, strong competition, and natural factors. Conversely, internal factors include financial factors, other functional factors (incompatibilities related to subsystems such as production, sales, etc.), administrative and organizational factors, disputes between partners, the historical background and experiences of the enterprise, and other factors (strikes, death of the owner, etc.) (pp. 8-10).

Classification of Crises

The classification of crises can be approached from a variety of perspectives. These include the place of occurrence, the origin, the intent, the artificial or natural conditions, and the processes involved. In this study, only the categorization proposed by Coombs (2014) will be used. As posited by Coombs (2014), most crises can be classified as either reputational or operational. Operational crises may be caused by a faulty product, a fire, or an explosion. In contrast, reputational crises are more likely to be caused by management misbehavior. While operational crises typically pose a threat to public safety and/or stakeholder welfare, reputational crises are much less likely to generate such concerns. The following table provides a summary of the classification of crises:

Table 1: Categorization of Crises

Crisis Type	Crisis Sources	Organizational Impact
Operational Crises	Fire, explosion, faulty product	It is possible that significant alterations may take place.
Reputation Crises	-Irresponsible behavior of the management -Corporate messages that disturbs stakeholders	No significant alterations to the operational procedures are to be implemented.

Source: (Coombs W. T., State of Crisis Communication: Evidence and the Bleeding Edge, 2014) has been formed.

Crisis Management and Crisis Communication

Crisis management is the process of preventing and reducing the adverse effects of a crisis (Coombs T. W., 2008). The Cambridge Dictionary (2024) defines crisis management as the actions taken to address an emergency or challenging situation in a structured manner. Turkish Language Association Dictionary (2024) defines crisis management as follows:

a. In the event of a national or international problem or natural disaster faced by a country, the committee formed by the experts on the subject to overcome the problem with the least damage and the work of this committee to make decisions,

b. It is defined as the management style of the managers who are assigned to work in the problematic period due to faulty production, raw material shortage, low quality, marketing, etc. in the companies.

Crisis communication is an applied field that aims to provide guidance to crisis managers to limit the damage that the crisis may cause to stakeholders and the organization (Coombs W. T., 2014, p. 2). Crisis management is a fundamental business function in the contemporary era. Crisis communication management constitutes a specific area of corporate communication.

2.2.1. Crisis Communication Theories

In the context of crisis intervention, it is not uncommon for businesses to seek forgiveness from the public and implement corrective solutions to transform the crisis into an opportunity. However, some businesses may resort to denying the crisis or attributing responsibility to external factors. There are numerous methodologies that can be employed in the context of crisis intervention. This discussion will focus on two distinct crisis intervention theories. The first of these is Image Reconstruction Theory, and the second is Situational Crisis Communication Theory.

2.2.1.1. Image Reconstruction Theory

It is a crisis communication theory developed by William Benoit in 1995. The theory posits that a crisis represents an assault on an organization's reputation, comprising two constituent elements. In the initial phase, the perpetrator is held accountable for their actions. In the subsequent phase, this action is recognized as an attack. The theory concentrates on how organizational response strategies are developed to the attack. Should the audience demonstrate a lack of concern regarding the matter in question following the crisis, this is not a cause for concern. However, it is of paramount importance for the organization that a specific audience does not approve of the action. In this context, perceptions are of greater consequence than reality. It is of greater consequence to ascertain whether the audience ascribes responsibility to the business for the action in question, rather than whether the business itself acknowledges such responsibility. When a business is held responsible for an action, its image and reputation are at risk (Benoit, 1997). In such instances, it is incumbent upon businesses to ascertain the factors that threaten their image, identify the target audience that is affected by these factors, and develop a persuasive response strategy for this audience. The strategies associated with Image Reconstruction Theory are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The Strategies of Image Reconstruction Theory

Strategy	Description
1. Denial	
Simple Denial	Saying we did not do it
Changing the Offence	The ascription of blame to an alternative actor or factor, rather than to the organization itself.
2. Avoiding Responsibility	
Provocation	Responding to the actions of another
Defeatability	Lack of knowledge about the situation or lack of control over the situation
Accidentally	We did not mean it to be like this
Good intentions	Saying we had good intentions
3. Reducing the Outlook/Impact of the Crisis	
Supporting	Reminding the positive qualities of the enterprise/person
Minimize the aggressiveness of the action	Claiming that the crisis has done little harm
Differentiation	To compare the action with similar ones
Establishing superiority	To draw the action into another context
Attacking the accuser	Challenging those who claim there is a crisis
Compensation	Offering money or goods
Corrective actions	Restore the situation to its pre-action state and/or

	promise not to repeat the action
Asking for forgiveness	Admitting guilt and expressing remorse

<div align="center">Source: (Coombs W. T., 2010, p. 32)</div>

2.2.1.2. Situational Crisis Communication Theory

The most favored approach to crisis intervention is SCCT (Situational Crisis Communication Theory). This theory is founded upon Causality Attribution Theory, a social psychological theory. The theory was first put forward by Coombs (2010). SCCT seeks to ascertain the level of threat posed by the crisis and to identify the requisite response strategies for the protection of the corporate reputation at the highest level. SCCT mostly relies on crisis responses to assess the threat to reputation. Hence, the theory addresses key considerations such as the content, style, and timing of communication during a crisis (Cınarlı, 2016, pp. 51-52). An overview of the theory is presented in Table 3.

<div align="center">Table 3: The Strategies of Situational Crisis Communication Theory</div>

Strategy	Example
Denial	Management claims there is no crisis
Scapegoat	Management blames external parties for crisis
Attack on accuser	Management is confronted with groups or individuals who claim that something is wrong
Excuse	Management tries to minimize its responsibility for the crisis by claiming that it had no control over the incident and did not intend to cause harm.
Justification	Management tries to minimize the damage caused by the crisis
Show Affection	Management praises and/or reminds other stakeholders who have worked well with the organization in the past
Anxiety	Management expresses concern about victims
Mercy	Management offers money or other gifts to victims
Regret	Management states that they feel remorseful about the crisis
Apology	Management takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness

Source: (Coombs W. T., 2010, p. 37)

2.3. Crisis Communication Process

According to Bundy et al. (2016, p. 1662), it is advantageous to consider the measures to be taken for crisis communication related to crisis management in three stages. These should be analyzed under three headings as measures to be taken before, during, and after the crisis.

2.3.1. Precautions to be Taken Before the Crisis

Among the pre-crisis measures, plans and necessary legislation for crises should be prepared firsthand. The Republic of Turkey established the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency in 2009 with Law No. 5902 against Natural Disasters, and disaster teams affiliated to different ministries and general directorates were united under the same roof (afad.gov.tr, 2024). Therefore, it is aimed to be prepared for disasters with a planned and trained team. Similarly, the preparation and training of crisis-oriented teams, the use of updated plans by time and conditions, and the completion of technological devices that give advance notice of the crisis are the measures that come to mind at first.

In order to minimize the damage to the organization, it is essential to implement measures that will prevent crises and prepare for them. It is clear-cut that international companies are particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of crises. For instance, multinational companies were significantly influenced by the 2018 monetary crisis. It would be an effective solution for multinational companies to create a brand value team and minimize threats to brand value. Nonetheless, the proximity of the target market or production facility to conflict zones and consumer hostility increases the likelihood of a crisis. Finally, the implementation of corporate social responsibility activities has been demonstrated to reduce the risk of a crisis (Coombs & Laufer, 2018, pp. 200-201).

As the media represents the most significant pillar of a crisis and the most potent instrument for reputational erosion, it is imperative to implement measures that anticipate and address the potential impact of the media before a crisis occurs. The initial measure to be taken is to identify the individual who will act as the crisis spokesperson on behalf of the business, thereby ensuring that the company is represented in the media. While the designated spokesperson is responsible for ensuring visibility in the media, it is essential to have a reliable crisis team in place to support him/her. In this regard, it is of the utmost importance to exercise due diligence when selecting the crisis spokesperson and team. Ideally, the spokesperson should be the business owner or CEO. It is also imperative to consider the establishment of a crisis center that provides information to the media with convenient access and the ability to disseminate news. Other measures for the media include the provision of contact numbers, photographs, sketches, and plans of the business, which can be utilized during the crisis. Furthermore, it is advisable to provide advance notifica-

tion of the contact details of local and state rescue teams, police, and gendarmes.

In addition to the measures, social networks should be monitored on a 24/7 basis, as social media has become a significant source of crises in recent years. It is also advisable to create a backup of the business web page and disseminate all pertinent information regarding the crisis via this site.

2.3.2. Precautions to be Taken During Crisis Intervention

The crisis must be addressed with immediate efficacy. Initially, the local and national rescue units, police, and gendarmerie should be contacted, contingent on the specific crisis circumstances. During the intervention, the crisis center should be activated in accordance with the magnitude of the crisis, and an announcement should be disseminated on the web page, social networks, and a press release signed by the crisis spokesperson should be distributed to all media outlets within a few hours right after the crisis breaks out.

In the context of crisis intervention, it is crucial to stress that the crisis is being addressed, that those responsible are being investigated, that there is concern about potential human and environmental losses, and that the victim and their relatives are being supported. In such instances, it would be particularly beneficial to utilize the strategies of 'regret and correction', which are embedded within the concept of forgiveness, one of the core strategies in crisis response.

In the context of crisis communication, it is imperative to adopt an active stance rather than a passive one. In the aftermath of a crisis, businesses typically adopt an active stance in managing the situation. In order to adopt an active stance in crisis communication, it is beneficial to consider the following (Cınarlı, 2016, pp. 42-43):

a. As the public expects that the business should take responsibility from the very moment that the crisis occurs, it is pivotal that all target groups, including employees, customers, stakeholders, and shareholders, who will be affected by the crisis, should be identified.

b. In a crisis environment, statements must be made by a single source, ideally a single spokesperson. This spokesperson should be appointed by the board of directors or the corporate communication directorate. The appointment of a single spokesperson will also assist in the prevention of rumors and the dissemination of information fairly and impartially.

c. A website dedicated to the crisis should be prepared and all developments, relevant legislation, questions and answers, corporate press conferences, and press releases should be published on this website. (In light of recent developments, this website may also serve as a social media account).

d. All statements must be based on accurate information. The dissemination of misleading and false information has the potential to cause significant harm to the organization.

e. All the actions taken during the crisis period should be archived, and measures should be taken to mitigate any legal issues that may arise in the future.

f. It is preferable to commend others rather than management itself in periods of crisis; therefore, it is advisable to cultivate positive relations with NGOs and the public during the preceding period.

Crisis communication must be conducted following three fundamental principles right after the occurrence of a crisis. These are timing, victim orientation, and the opposition of misinformation (Coombs W. T., 2014, p. 3).

a. **Timing**: the organization should be the first to explain the crisis. While some companies may choose to avoid the issue, it is beneficial to receive information directly from the business rather than through the media or social media in a time of crisis communication.

b. **A victim-oriented approach** emphasizes the experiences of those affected by the crisis. A crisis has the potential to cause a range of adverse effects on individuals, including physical, psychological, and financial losses. Such losses may be incurred by employees, stakeholders, or customers. In this regard, a communicative approach that is based on a conciliatory stance and the provision of assistance to the victim will invariably prove more effective. It is of the utmost importance to emphasize concerns for public safety and welfare in messages.

c. **The opposing of misinformation** is contingent upon the target audience receiving information from the organization itself. It is imperative that all information is provided by the enterprise, that all media is monitored, and that all misinformation is intervened promptly. This is since the enterprise will suffer a loss of reputation in the event of intentional or unintentional misinformation by different media and individuals.

2.3.3. Issues to be Addressed After the Crisis

The post-crisis phase encompasses the actions undertaken after the normalization of operations and the dissemination of pertinent information to relevant stakeholders. It also includes collaboration with investigative bodies and the identification of key learnings from the crisis (Cınarlı, 2016, p. 38).

At this juncture, it is of paramount importance to derive insights from the crisis and integrate these into all business practices. This necessitates a comprehensive reassessment of strategic and tactical plans, with the incorporation of requisite modifications. The target audience desires confirmation that the crisis has come to an end and that the requisite lessons have been derived from it. This information is conveyed to the public either through press conferences or announcements on social media or websites. This stage is usually skipped by enterprises, and it remains unclear whether the parties responsible for the crisis have been identified and what corrective measures have been taken. Such information is expected not only by the external environment but also by the internal environment. One aspect of the positive image desired to be created in employees is this kind of information about the crisis and its aftermath.

The archiving system of an event is of great consequence in the context of management processes. In this regard, it is significant that all news and comments published on social media and traditional media during the crisis are gathered and placed into a physical or digital archive.

In the context of a crisis, it is essential to assess the potential impact on the corporate reputation and to implement strategies in case of any damage. These strategies may encompass a range of activities, including business trips, corporate advertisements, the engagement of opinion leaders, and press conferences.

It is quite common for organizations to confuse the concepts of crisis management and crisis communication. The two concepts differ in terms of content and management. For instance, a legal assessment is an indispensable part of crisis management. Lawyers are responsible for conducting such assessments. However, explaining to the public at the time of the crisis that a legal assessment is being issued concerns crisis communication. It can be argued that 99% of crisis management is communication. In this respect, it is beneficial to take the following measures regarding crisis communication (Kadıbesegil, 2018):

a. It is recommended that a crisis guide be prepared which includes instructions for responding to crises in enterprises.

b. It is further recommended that discussions be conducted on crisis scenarios on an annual basis.

c. In these discussions, attention should be paid to the applicability of the crisis guides and communication guides should be prepared together with them.

d. It is of the utmost importance that the individuals selected to serve as spokespersons are individuals whose word can be trusted by the public.

e. It is imperative that there is continuous and uninterrupted communication in the event of a crisis.

2.3.4. Crisis Desk and Crisis Spokesperson in Crisis Communication

In the context of crisis management, the establishment of a dedicated crisis desk represents a crucial element in the effective management of a crisis. It is optimal for companies with suitable physical facilities and for organizations that prioritize crisis management and have developed a culture of crisis preparedness, which may include the establishment of a well-equipped crisis room or even a press room. Consequently, the management of all information can be conducted from a single location. The crisis desk also fulfills this function. It is important to note that the media should be regarded as a valuable resource and that both local and national media outlets should be considered. Information that is beneficial and positive should be shared without discrimination among media members. It is essential to monitor media content, including traditional and new media, and to make corrections and provide explanations when necessary (Cınarlı, 2016, pp. 61-62).

It is recommended that the information, tables, photographs, and lists that will be required by the media in the context of the creation of crisis desks be made available in advance. The composition of this document may vary according to the specific field of activity of the organization in question. In the event of an aircraft accident, it will be necessary to provide the media with a range of information, including details of passengers and crew, the type of aircraft involved, the most recent maintenance records, and photographs of the aircraft. In the event of a coal mine accident, the establishment of a crisis desk will be necessary. In such an instance, documents pertaining to the identities of the workers on shift, a sketch of the mine, the mine's occupational safety record, and inspector reports from the Ministry of Industry will be required. Additionally, the provision of essential resources and equipment, such as desks, electricity, internet access,

photocopying, and so forth, will be essential for the smooth functioning of the crisis desk.

The necessity for an efficacious crisis spokesperson in organizations is paramount, particularly in instances of issuing statements to the press. The crisis spokesperson must possess a comprehensive understanding of the organizational work process, the ability to speak with poise in front of an audience, representation skills, exemplary diction, the capacity to maintain impartiality, the ability to listen attentively, the ability to stay calm, high communication skills, proficiency in utilizing electronic tools, the ability to discern between confirmed and unconfirmed information, and the capacity to pay attention to their attire.

2.3.5. Precautions to be Taken for Corporate Communication in Crisis Communication

In an article in 2003 for The Wall Street Journal, Ron Alsop, an editor, and columnist, offered advice to companies regarding the management of their corporate reputation in the context of a crisis. (Cited by Acar (2012, pp. 18-19).

- Keep the job tight! It is crucial to manage the crisis correctly in its early stages. Adherence to the appropriate behavioral and policy standards during this period can facilitate the preservation of the organization's reputation, minimizing potential damage.

- Be transparent! In a case of scandal, information mustn't be withheld from the public. In the meantime, it is significant to avoid remaining silent. Failure to respond to any claim may lead to the formation of suspicion. It is advisable to have a well-defined communication plan that can be immediately implemented in the event of a crisis.

- Take advantage of the Internet! It is advisable to publish recent developments related to the crisis on the organization's website or a dedicated website specifically designed for the crisis. It is advisable to disseminate this information to relevant stakeholders, both within and outside the organization. It is also prudent to monitor any external commentary on the situation, including in online forums and email groups that may not be under your direct control.

- Avoid creating a panic atmosphere. Crises and scandals are sudden events, but it is crucial to maintain a sense of composure within the organization. In some cases, it may be advisable to state that a

formal statement will be made only after all the facts and information have been ascertained.

- Apologize appropriately in the appropriate circumstances. One should refrain from displaying arrogance and should not become defensive. It is incumbent upon the individual to offer an apology when circumstances warrant such an action. It is beneficial for the corporate reputation to offer an apology when appropriate. Legal counsel may not advise against issuing an apology. Nevertheless, the financial implications of restoring public confidence may exceed the costs associated with legal proceedings. It is therefore essential to consider this aspect.

- Be prudent to take the possibility of changing the name into account. It would be erroneous to assume that a company name change is a panacea. A name change should be considered a last resort. A considered approach must be taken in this regard. It would be prudent to capitalize on the reputation of the name in question and the credits of past successes.

- Be punctual with the timing. When a company decides to alter its name, the timing of the change is of great importance. This is because a company's name is inextricably linked to its identity and its history.

- Maintain communication with stakeholders after a crisis. Once the crisis has been resolved, a company can resume its corporate perception management and advertising campaigns. However, it is vital to ensure that any negative perceptions are addressed and that the company avoids creating a new crisis.

- Assess the reputation of the organization. As the corporate reputation policy and action plan are implemented, it is essential to measure the reputation of the company regularly. This should be done by monitoring the views of analysts, journalists, customers, and other third parties. Should a favorable development emerge following the crisis, it would be an opportune moment to initiate a new reputation management campaign.

- Consider the time required to recover from a crisis. A study conducted by the communications consultancy Burson Marsteller revealed that the average length of time required to recover from a crisis is four years. If you are a reputable company, you can recover more easily.

The occurrence of crises in companies for various reasons primarily results in a loss of trust towards the company in the target audience and stakeholders. This loss of trust consequently leads to damage to the company's reputation. James Lukasewski, known as 'America's Crisis Guru', posits that to repair the damaged reputation after the crisis, trust must first be rebuilt. This rebuilding process is realized by taking nine important steps, as outlined by Lukasewski (2020). These steps are as follows:

- Sincerity. It is essential to acknowledge the existence of the problem and to make it known through verbal communication.
- Excessive empathy / apology. It is vital to convey, whether verbally or written, a sense of regret and sorrow for the injury, insult, failure, or other misfortune that has befallen another individual. Furthermore, it is essential to declare a commitment to rectify the situation.
- Explanation. It is beneficial to provide an immediate and concise explanation of the circumstances that led to the problem, including the underlying causes and behaviors that contributed to the situation, regardless of how trivial or embarrassing the initial mistake may have been.
- Affirmation. It is essential to elucidate the insights gained from the situation, particularly in terms of how they will influence future conduct. It is imperative to pledge unwavering commitment to disseminating further information until the crisis is resolved or the public harm is rectified.
- Declaration. A public commitment to address the issues in a forthright manner and to take positive steps to resolve the problem should be made.
- Remorse. Regret, empathy, or even shame resulting from the crisis should be expressed. Any responsibility for negligence, etc. that led to the situation occurring in the first place should be acknowledged.
- Consultation. It is recommended to get immediate assistance and guidance from those affected by the crisis from a variety of sources, including those within the government, society at large, independent observers, and even competitors in the field.
- Commitment: It is recommended that the desired outcome be made public, and that the objective be set at zero. This means zero mistakes, zero defects, zero wrong decision and zero problem. It

would be beneficial that the commitment be made to permanently prevent such situations to the best of one's ability.

- Refund. It is recommended that a refund be provided as soon as possible to cover the costs of the crisis-related damage. Acceptance of refund requests and notification to customers to return them should be made. It is further recommended that payments be made either now or, more likely, later, in excess of what society and victims would normally expect.

In addition to the measures, it is advisable to implement the following strategies, which will contribute to the enhancement of the organization's reputation. Firstly, it is essential to conduct a comprehensive review of both short- and long-term plans, to identify potential areas for improvement and formulate strategies for their renewal. International activities should be organized with global markets in mind. In the event of a crisis, laying off the personnel should be considered a last resort in the context of cost-cutting measures. Plans for growth and development should not be canceled outright, but rather postponed until the crisis has abated. Finally, given that many businesses require government support in the aftermath of a crisis, managers should be aware of this and sensitive to it (Simsek, 2021, s. 37).

3. Crisis Communicaton and Social Media

The Internet, which is utilized in every sector of modern society, has made a significant impact on business practices. While the internet environment offers significant advantages in crisis communication and crisis management, it can also pose challenges. In particular, the issues that are discussed on blogs and social networks have the potential to become a source of crisis for all members of society, including businesses (Sayımer, 2012, p. 238). In recent years, the influence of social networks has grown to such an extent that Twitter in Turkey has been dubbed the "Twitter Ministry of Justice" due to its role in shaping public opinion in cases where the judicial system has not met expectations (manset.com.tr, 2021). From this perspective, businesses must maintain a constant and vigilant presence on social media platforms. Therefore, it is essential to first gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of social media.

3.1. Social Media
3.1.1. The Concept of Social Media

The increasing utilization of the internet and the rapid advancements in communication technologies have resulted in significant alterations to the

methods employed by companies to engage with their target audiences. One of the emerging channels in the domain of communication is social media. Contemporary communication is increasingly orientated towards the virtual environment, with social media representing a primary driver of this shift.

The term "social media" is defined in different ways by different authors. Maccann International (2008, p. 10), an international consulting company, uses the definition of social media as "media platforms and online applications for information and content sharing, collaboration and easy interaction". Akar (2010, p. 17) offers an alternative perspective, defining social media as websites built on Web 2.0 technologies that facilitate more profound social interaction, community formation, and the realization of collaborative projects. Dabner (2012, p. 69) proposes that social media can be defined as internet and mobile-based tools and devices that integrate technology, telecommunications, and social interaction. This is achieved by enabling the construction, and dissemination of words, images (static and moving), and sounds. In light of the aforementioned definitions, it is possible to define social media as websites with social content that enable their participants to express themselves in online environments, communicate, join groups, and contribute to these environments with their ideas, comments, and publications (Koksal & Ozdemir, 2013, p. 325).

3.1.2. Features of Social Media

Social media differs from traditional media due to reasons such as its two-way nature, the ability for individuals to disseminate their own ideological and technological content, and the absence of time and space constraints (Kara and Özgen, 2012, p. vii). According to Mayfield (2008, p. 6), social media is best understood as a new online group and can be defined as a shared space with many characteristics. These features are interconnected virtual reality, interconnected public spaces, private space public space intricacy, commercial participation, openness, conversation, community, connection, interactionism, immediacy, user instead of viewer, complexity of production and consumption, decentralization, internal gain motivation, economic, structures that have individuality and mass characteristics, ignored hierarchical relations, cosmopolitical, chain communication occurrence, changeable messages multimedia features, free from time and space restrictions, a different ownership structure, and a large amount of information providing structures.

3.2. Crisis Communication in Social Media

As of 2024, 5.4 billion individuals, representing approximately 40% of the global population, were identified as social media users. In 2023, the number of social media users increased by 5.6% compared to the previous year (wearesocial.com, 2024). The fast and low-cost nature of social media has provided businesses with a significant advantage in crisis management. The fact that most businesses' target audiences are active on social media streamlines the crisis management process, enables businesses to navigate crises with minimal damage and greater efficiency.

Despite these advantages of social media in crises, if the target audience is dissatisfied, it can lead to the organization being targeted very quickly, even to the danger of being exposed to a lynch campaign in social media terms.

In the contemporary era, the capacity to discern and respond to crises in other enterprises, regions, or countries represents a pivotal concern for enterprises, as well as the potential emergence of crises within the enterprise itself. The target audience perceives businesses as entities with the capacity for individual expression and action. In the event of a disaster, they anticipate businesses to demonstrate sorrow and to inquire about potential courses of action in a manner analogous to individuals. This expectation was exemplified in the aftermath of the 2023 Kahramanmaras earthquake and the 2024 Israeli assault on Gaza.

Three distinct types of crises have been identified as a result of stakeholder engagement on social media. These are crises that originate from social media posts by customers who are dissatisfied with the quality of customer service, crises that reflect anger toward the company, and stakeholder posts that highlight instances of corporate malpractice (Coombs W. T., 2014, pp. 7-8).

Customer services are the units that measure the satisfaction of businesses after service and follow up complaints. All businesses offer customer service via telephone, in addition to utilizing web pages and social media. A single instance of customer dissatisfaction can have a cascading effect, reaching thousands of individuals and potentially resulting in a significant loss of reputation for the business. A case in point is the 2016 Opel Türkiye crisis. The incident began when a customer's vehicle, left at an Opel service center for repairs, was taken out of the service area without permission by an intoxicated service employee and was subsequently involved in an accident. The incident subsequently escalated into a crisis as a consequence of its dissemination on the social network Eksi Sozluk and

the responses it elicited. The business's decision to disseminate negative content rather than proactively addressing and resolving the crisis contributed to its intensification (Kayıs, 2017, s. 144-148).

In the contemporary business environment, organizations are expected to adopt a mindset that is analogous to that of an individual, and to respond to developments in a manner that is consistent with that individualistic approach. While Israel's attack on Gaza was met with global condemnation, the decision of certain businesses to express support for Israel incited a strong negative reaction among the target audience, which subsequently gave rise to boycott campaigns. One of the organizations leading the boycott is the Black Sea Universities Union, which has 17 members. This NGO has announced that a boycott will be implemented at the universities in question against brands that trade food to the Israeli army (bartin.edu.tr, 2023).

A third factor that gives rise to a crisis in social media is the inappropriate conduct of businesses. Such malpractices may encompass a variety of wrongdoings, including the formation of false agreements and the dissemination of false statements to the public. Furthermore, failing to act in response to suffering may also be regarded as malpractice. Besides, a lack of response may result in the perception of indifference or insensitivity. Consequently, businesses that are not directly affected by a crisis but demonstrate an absence of sensitivity to the crisis may face a new crisis through social media. In the aftermath of the Kahramanmaras earthquake, digital platforms such as Netflix Turkey, Disney Plus, and Spotify, along with the coffee chain Starbucks, which has hundreds of branches in Turkey, were criticized for their silence on the disaster. In this post, Netflix stated that they were sad about the earthquake and that they were working for support. They stated that they collected 6 million TL aid and that they forwarded this money to aid organizations (diken.com.tr, 2023).

Figure 1: Company Statements in Response to Boycott Calls
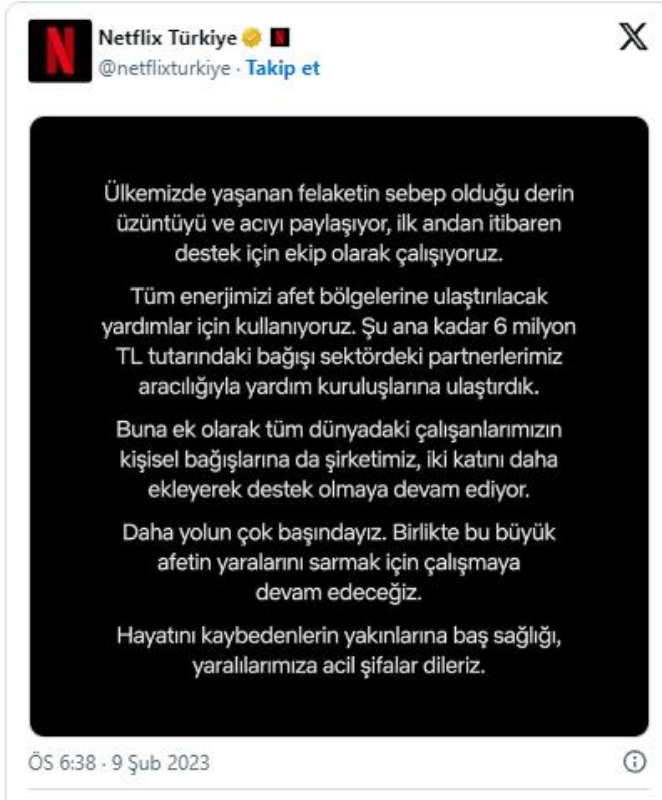
Source: (netflixturkiye, 2023)

In the aftermath of the Kahramanmaras earthquake and the subsequent calls for boycott on social media, Disney Türkiye, a business that had not previously demonstrated the expected level of interest in assisting the region, was compelled to issue a statement in response to these calls. In the statement, it was asserted that a global aid campaign had been initiated, which all Disney employees were encouraged to participate in (marketing-turkiye.com.tr, 2023).

In the current era, it is imperative to recognize that a crisis can emerge at any given moment and have a detrimental impact on the company's reputation. The exponential growth in the number of communication tools and methods, coupled with the rapid obsolescence of news, forces both news websites and social media users to constantly adapt to the evolving news agenda.

Furthermore, social media crises may also emerge as a result of actions or statements made by company employees. In this regard, in collaboration with the company's legal counsel, issues that may potentially impair the

company's reputation on social media platforms should be identified and communicated to employees. Nevertheless, it is crucial that in periods of crisis, the company is able to effectively manage the situation without compromising its capacity for rational decision-making.

3.3. Positive Examples of the Use of Social Media and Websites in Time of Crisis

The rapidity and 24/7 monitoring capabilities of social media afford individuals, businesses, and governments a significant advantage in reaching target audiences during crises. This assertion is corroborated by the findings of several academic studies on this subject.

In a study Kocyigit (2023, pp. 81-82) analyzed the Twitter accounts of AFAD and AHBAP during the 2023 Kahramanmaras earthquake. The researcher analyzed the posts made by both institutions in the seven days following the earthquake and found that AFAD made 180 posts and AHBAP made 86 posts. The analysis revealed that the posts were concentrated in seven sub-codes: announcement-information, coordination, aid, warning, donation, thanks, and condolence. The announcement-information code was identified as the most intensely shared. The study concluded that Twitter, a social media network, became an important medium for crisis communication in the days following the earthquake.

Likewise, Ozcan and Isık (2023, pp. 101-102) conducted an analysis of the utilization of social media in the aftermath of the Kahramanmaras Earthquake. The study revealed that individuals and state institutions disseminated a considerable volume of information and requests for assistance via social media in the aftermath of the disaster. Ozcan and Işık, like Kocyigit (2023), revealed that social media, and in particular Twitter, were frequently utilized in the days following the earthquake. While institutions disseminated announcements and information on a range of matters, individuals also sought assistance by sharing their contact details on Twitter. Other users facilitated the delivery of aid by tagging and retweeting the relevant accounts. Figure 2 illustrates the response of the singer and social media phenomenon Haluk Levent to an individual seeking assistance. In this post, an earthquake victim sent a post to Haluk Levent in the form of "save me" and Haluk Levent responded by being careful not to finish the mobile phone charge. Then our teams gave the message that they were coming to rescue you.

Figure 2: Share Asking for Help from The Rubble in The Earthquake
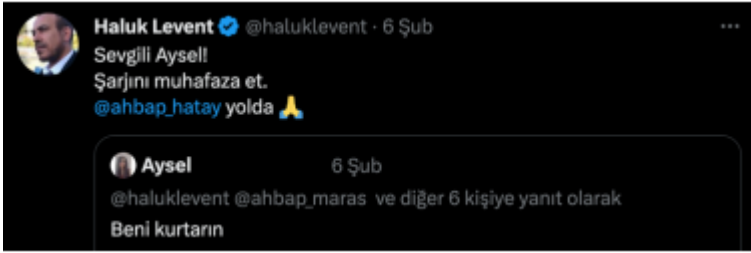
Source: (Levent, 2023)

In the study conducted by Cetin and Isık, it was observed that social media was employed as a conduit for disseminating information and announcing developments to relevant parties. Furthermore, it was noted that messaging applications were utilized in the aftermath of the crisis. In particular, individuals unable to travel to the affected area established public groups on messaging applications with the objective of disseminating the addresses received to the appropriate individuals. The study also indicated that websites were utilized during the crisis. It was observed that individuals provided information regarding individuals trapped under the rubble to the website named earthquake.io. The website then disseminated this information to state institutions.

The website was developed by volunteers with expertise in information technology with the objective of collating search and rescue operations and requests for assistance and support in a database and disseminating them to duly authorized institutions and organizations (deprem.io, 2023). Figure 3 depicts the website in question.

Figure 3: Website Usage Example During a Crisis
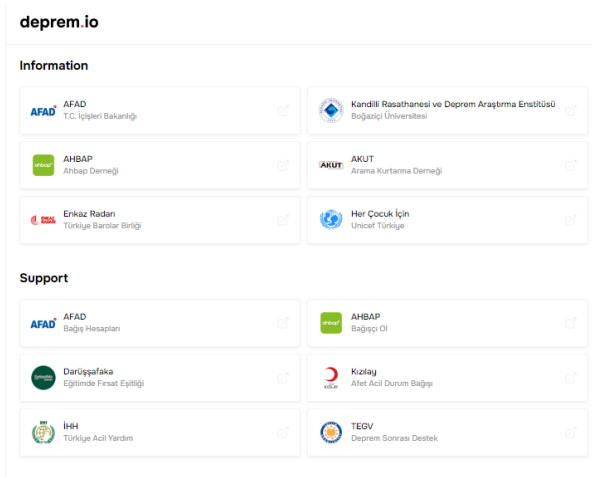
Source: (deprem.io, 2023)

The term "turning the crisis into an opportunity" is typically used to describe a situation in which an individual or entity has been affected by a crisis and has subsequently profited from it. In the 2023 earthquake in Kahramanmaras and its surrounding areas, companies that were not directly affected by the crisis in the region also engaged in activities aimed at supporting the region. In particular, e-commerce companies assumed a pioneering role in this respect. Türkiye's foremost e-commerce company, Trendyol, participated in the "Earthquake Relief Mobilization" spearheaded by the Ministry of Trade, ensuring the delivery of customers' orders of essential items to the region free of charge (trendyol.com, 2023). This initiative by Trendyol can be regarded as a social responsibility campaign aimed at supporting earthquake relief efforts and as a means of enhancing the company's positive reputation.

Conclusion

Crises can arise unexpectedly and cause significant damage to businesses, first to their image and then to the reputation they have worked years to build. These damages not only affect the image and reputation, but also cause a decrease in the sales of the business or significant customer losses.

New media represents a medium that is experiencing exponential growth on a daily basis, and where word-of-mouth communication is the most powerful media. Indeed, 67.0% of contemporary consumers adhere to the tenet of word-of-mouth communication, procuring products, and patronizing organizations they have encountered through this conduit (Chaney, 2009). Besides, social media has the potential to become a significant disruptive force. The precise timing and location of the explosion remain unknown. Hence, social media should be subject to constant monitoring, with due consideration given to the content disseminated in chat rooms and to any indications of a potential crisis. Even after a crisis has occurred on social media, it is essential to address the crisis and assume responsibility with open, transparent, and accurate communication. In the context of a crisis, it is of paramount importance to maintain continuous communication and to remain calm. The establishment of an effective public relations unit that is capable of accurately predicting the potential emergence of a crisis and its probable timing will significantly contribute to the preparedness of an organization for such eventualities.

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CORPORATE ADVERTISING IN DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

*Zeynep EKMEKÇİ**

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, mass media plays an important role in shaping the public sphere as well as strengthening their own institutional assets. Especially because of the internet becoming commercial, the process of mutual interaction has accelerated and accelerated. It has become possible for global industries to increase their competitiveness by using communication technologies. Therefore, digital media have become important channels as an area for organizations that emerge to produce profit or services to manage this competition process. In particular, the interactive, instant feedback, versatility, globality, instant news and information flow offered by Web 2.0 technology, and the ability to create virtual communities make digital environments attractive for organizations.

To understand why public relations and corporate advertising activities are important in digital environments, it will be instructive to look at the research conducted by Turkish Statistical Institute (Turk Stat) on the internet usage of businesses. According to the Research on the Use of Information Technologies in Enterprises conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute, the rate of enterprises with internet access was determined as 96%. 40.2% of these enterprises use social media applications, and the most preferred social media platforms are networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing with 89.1%. The website ownership rate is 55.9%, with the highest rate of 90.1% recorded among enterprises engaged in "information and communication" activities. The rate of e-sales is 18.2%, and when analyzed by economic activity groups, the highest e-sales rate of 39.5% is observed in enterprises engaged in "accommodation and food services" activities. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software usage is 29.7%, while Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software usage is 12.1%. The use of paid cloud computing was 48.2% in enterprises with 250 or more employees, and the rate of enterprises using artificial intelligence was 5.5%. In the light of all these data, it is seen that businesses are aware of

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the advantages of digital environments and there is a tendency to move their corporate assets and visibility to the digital environment. Based on these data, it is possible to talk about the necessity of moving the public relations, advertising, promotion and marketing activities of organizations to digital environments. Some researchers also support the necessity of the tendency of businesses to move their assets and corporate identities to the internet environment. For example, the trust of Generation Z in social media influencers has been found to have a significant and positive effect on the desire to travel and the evaluation of alternatives in the pre-travel purchase process. Most of the time, people willingly and voluntarily accept the products or services offered to them by the new media, and do not hesitate to share their personal information with product and service providers. Therefore, businesses/organizations must substitute their presence in this new generation communication channel (Güneş et al., 2022; Terzioğlu, 2023; TÜİK, 2023).

As a result, in addition to traditional public relations and advertising methods, corporate communication and advertising activities through digital platforms are becoming increasingly important. In this context, the role and impact of corporate advertising in digital public relations becomes important in terms of organizational image.

Digital Public Relations

Digital public relations is defined as the management of communication between an organization and the public through internet applications. Internet applications include websites, games, and instant messaging services that process data and display internet-mediated information via text, sound, graphics, images, video, or binary (executable) (Vercic et al, 2015). Digital public relations is tightly related to Gruning's (2005) two-way public relations model. This model emphasizes that communication is not one-sided and that participants interact with each other. The fact that digital environments are inherently interactive is compatible with the principles of this model. Unlike traditional media, digital media supports many interactive features, such as the ability for users to create, share, and provide feedback. This means that public relations has now become a part of mutual interaction and communication networks rather than just one-way communication. Digital public relations strategies are based on the principles of mutual understanding, trust, and relationship management emphasized in Gruning's model. In this context, the two-way nature of digital

environments enables public relations to be carried out in a more effective and participatory manner (December, 1996; Vercic et al., 2015).

Public relations, which are structured to achieve corporate goals, are mandatory for public institutions, businesses, political parties, in short, for all institutions and organizations (Peltekoğlu & Askeroğlu, 2019). Therefore, businesses carry out various communication activities in a competitive field. Within the scope of public relations practices, media reflections are seen as an important factor in promoting and announcing the product or brand. For example, according to a study, organizations' websites are designed to provide information, advertise and market, and receive feedback from the target audience (Peltekoğlu, 2016). In terms of public relations, the interactive nature of the digital environment allows instant and fast communication with the target audience. Public relations should closely observe the behaviours and expectations of the target audience in accordance with changing conditions (Wardani et al., 2022).

Effective public relations departments gain the ability to identify stakeholders who are affected by or influence organizational decisions by being involved in those decisions. Then, they should develop strategic programs to communicate with these stakeholders. This includes conducting formative research to identify potential issues, setting program goals for stakeholder communication, setting measurable goals for communication initiative, and using both formal and informal methods to assess the effectiveness of the program. In contrast, less effective departments often lack formative and evaluative research practices and often have communication goals that are vague and difficult to measure (Gruning, 2005).

Social media facilitates not only interactions between organizations and the public, but also between online community members who consume, produce, and share information, allowing for participation as an active part of meaning-making (Arief & Saputra, 2019).

The new public relations in the digital environment require reconsidering the relationships established with the target audience (Setiawan, 2024). In this case, New Public Relations adopts a more transparent and honest approach to communicating with the public. Openness and integrity are important for building trust in an age where information is easily accessible. Because while this new generation of public relations facilitates the rebuilding of trust with the target audience, on the other hand, it makes it difficult to control the crisis in any crisis environment due to the speed of its spread (Susanto & Setyanto, 2019)

It has been determined that traditional and digital public relations work synergistically and organizations need this synergy. In addition to good communication, interpersonal communication, writing, analytical thinking, and soft skills, a public relations practitioner is expected to be familiar with the digital platform and could design digital content (Permatasari et al., 2021).

The correct definition of public relations in the age of artificial intelligence is the definition made by the Institute of Public Relations today. According to this definition, public relations is about reputation. What organizations do and what they say is defined as the results of what others say about the organization (Arief & Saputra, 2019).

With the industrial revolution, the role and function of public relations has changed dramatically. In this context, Arief & Saputra divides the development of public relations into 4 phases.

PR 1.0 era refers to the period in which traditional PR practices are dominant. During this period, PR was monitoring manual media daily. Print media was used as the main source of information. PR 1.0 generally exhibited a one-way, vertical communication model with the target audience.

PR 2.0 era marks the rise of online media. In this period, PR has adopted a horizontal, relational communication model from multiple sources to multiple target audiences. The transformation of print media into digital platforms has changed the role of PR.

PR 3.0 era provides an interactive transformation of the character of PR with the proliferation of social media. In this period, activities such as citizen journalism and corporate journalism have gained importance. Everyone's ability to publish news has fundamentally changed the dynamics of communication.

PR 4.0 era represents a period of increasing influence of artificial intelligence and big data. data is increasing. During this period, it has become possible for PR tasks to be simplified with AI-powered tools. This offers new opportunities for various activities, from distributing press releases to campaign management and data analytics (Arief & Saputra, 2019).

Looking at all this classification, it is observed that the nature of public relations has evolved in parallel with the nature of mass media.

Digital public relations require the ability to encourage active participation in understanding interactions and responding to needs. This includes the use of innovative skills and the creation of a positive online reputation. Skills such as creating quality messages, data analysis, and crisis communi-

cation management are essential for digital public relations. Building and maintaining solid, ethical relationships with the public is essential to building trust. Optimizing the use of digital media while adhering to ethical guidelines can help organizations develop beneficial engagement relationships. This approach will contribute to the protection and strengthening of the reputation of institutions (Purba & Indainanto, 2024).

Digital Corporate Advertising

Corporate advertising is a type of advertising that refers to the use of paid media that tries to benefit the image of the institution rather than the products and services of the institution (Geçikli, 2016, p. 60). Therefore, corporate advertising emerges as a type of advertising in which an organization is promoted in a broad context and for which space and time is purchased in the media. Corporate advertising aims to create a positive image of the organization, support its financial policies, and position the company on current issues (Jefkins, 1990). In this context, corporate advertising is an area that is in elbow contact with public relations. Their use of the media for common purposes and their efforts to create a positive image allow public relations and advertising to work together.

Traditional corporate advertising involves one-way communication due to the nature of the mass media it uses. This situation limits the interaction of organizations by disseminating their messages to large audiences. However, in the digital environment, corporate advertising has evolved into an interactive and target-oriented structure. Digital corporate advertising provides organizations with the ability to offer more personalized and original content to their target audiences. The interactive nature of digital environments allows organizations to evaluate feedback instantly. Organizations have the opportunity to continuously optimize their advertising strategies according to the feedback they receive. This contributes to organizations getting more return on their advertising budgets and creates an opportunity to influence their target audiences more effectively. These features of digital advertising help organizations better understand consumer behaviour and manage their advertising strategies more efficiently. Thus, in a competitive environment, organizations can gain more advantages and increase their market share.

Corporate advertising is at the heart of digital public relations strategies. Businesses use corporate advertising to increase brand awareness on digital platforms, promote their products and services, and reach their target audiences directly. The framework of corporate public relations and

advertising in the digital world is highlighted by Levine et al. in "The Cluetrain Manifesto." The manifesto states that digital environments provide direct communication to businesses and that this communication is an important part of public relations. While traditional advertising is based on an approach that transmits information in one-way, corporate advertising is also transforming with the opportunities brought by the digital age. This process, which is no longer limited to sending messages to the consumer, gains a quality that encourages interaction with consumers and participation of consumers. Organizations go beyond promoting their products or services, they are able to communicate directly with consumers and receive immediate feedback and interact (2009, p. 187). They form a virtual community by being found.

Digital tools, especially social media platforms, promote transparency and sincerity. Organizations can interact with consumers while sharing more humanly and accessible with their target audience. In this way, it is possible to establish strong and meaningful bonds with consumers. This situation positively affects brand loyalty. Therefore, this digital transformation takes corporate advertising beyond just transmitting information. It becomes an important indicator that the organization and its target audience are evolving towards a process focused on mutual communication and interaction.

The role of corporate advertising in digital public relations is key to strengthening the brand's online presence, increasing engagement with the target audience, and shaping the brand image. Thus, it supports the process of meeting the needs of users by using the affordances provided by social media applications and thus strengthening the online presence of the brand, increasing interaction with the target audience and shaping the brand image. While digital platforms increase the reach of corporate advertisements to large audiences, they offer advantages such as personalization of targeted messages and the addition of interactive elements. As a result, brands can build deeper and more effective connections with target audiences and increase brand loyalty (Karahanna et al., 2018, p. 752; Smith, 2011).

Another important role of corporate advertisements in digital public relations is their use as an effective tool in crisis communication. Digital platforms enable brands to quickly respond to crisis situations and protect their reputations (Liu et al., 2015, p. 83).For example, corporate advertisements on social media allow brands to adopt a transparent communication strategy in crisis situations, allowing them to respond quickly to the

crisis. In this context, the role of corporate advertisements in digital public relations strategies emerges as an indispensable medium for brands to strengthen and maintain their reputation.

Corporate Advertising Tools in Digital Public Relations

Digital corporate advertising is a basic marketing strategy that today's businesses use to increase brand awareness, promote their products and services, and reach their target audience. With the effective use of digital channels as well as traditional advertising methods, the impact and reach of corporate advertising is becoming significantly widespread.

Digital corporate advertising can be carried out on a variety of digital platforms. Online channels such as websites, social media platforms, search engines, and mobile applications offer organizations the opportunity to reach a wide audience and identify their target audience. These platforms increase the impact of marketing efforts by providing the opportunity to personalize advertising messages and reach the target audience in a more direct way. Some of the digital media tools commonly used in corporate advertising include:

1.Websites: At a time when the effectiveness of traditional promotional tools and their effectiveness on target groups are questioned, the internet and web pages have started to show themselves as a saviour technique for public relations practitioners (Göksel &Yurdakul 2002: 325). 92.6% of public relations practitioners stated that digital media tools provide convenience in media relations, 84% state that it provides the opportunity to communicate directly with the public. Those working in the field of public relations use the internet to increase the effectiveness of target groups. In particular, it uses the convenience it provides in maintaining relations with the media, which provides data to the public, to communicate directly with the public. In an ideal website, a number of elements such as accessibility, general appearance and ease of use come to the fore. (Gower & Cho, 2001, p. 87; Tarhan, 2007)

In 2022, in the best corporate website research in Turkey, BİM's website received the best score in categories such as ease of use, understandability, and accessibility.
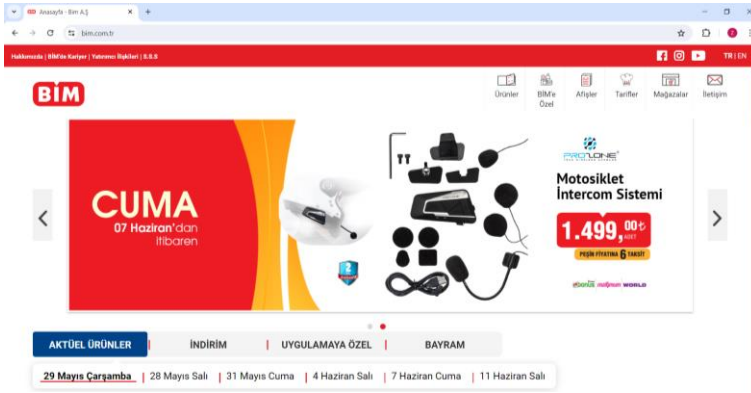
Figure 1. Best Corporate Website Source: (novasta.com.tr/turkiyenin-en-kurumsal-web-siteleri-2022, 2023).

2. Social Media Ads: Advertising on popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube is an effective way to reach the target audience directly. These types of ads are often targeted based on demographics, interests, and behavioural characteristics. Social networking sites are applications that allow users to communicate by creating profiles that contain personal information, inviting friends and colleagues to access those profiles, and sending emails and instant messages to each other. These personal profiles contain all kinds of information, including photos, videos, audio files, and blogs (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2020).

3. Search Engine Ads: Through search engine advertising platforms such as Google Ads, users are enabled to see the company's ads when they search for specific keywords. These ads may be targeted based on users' interests and search habits.

4. Content Marketing: Offering valuable content in the company's field of expertise through content such as blog posts, articles, videos, and infographics can create engagement and engagement with the target audience. This content can be disseminated through channels such as social media and email marketing.

5. Email Marketing: Through email newsletters and campaigns, special offers, news, and announcements are delivered to existing customers or potential customers. Personalized email content can increase customer loyalty and encourage sales.

6. Interactive Content: Interactive content, such as webinars, online contests, interactive infographics, and quizzes, can increase engagement with the target audience and strengthen brand awareness.

In this context, animations can also be channels where corporate advertising and public relations can be made. It can be an important tool to reach young consumers, in particular. Animations are the act of animating a succession of connected motion frames over a period of seconds. The main basis of the name animation is the construction of images that are not these with various techniques. Today, animation education is enriched with constantly developing and renewed technical equipment when traditional methods are exceeded. In the production process, corporate creatives can be used, as in digital games (Küçükalkan & Polat, 2023).

7. Influencer Marketing: Influencer marketing is a 21st century marketing created based on the trust that the content creator produces on his followers by making use of his own image and making personal communication. It is a type of word-of-mouth marketing that belongs to the century. Through social media influencers, the brand's products or services can be promoted and the target audience can be reached. Because influencers often have large followings, they can get the brand's message across to a wide audience (Güneş et al., 2022).

In research conducted by Marketing Turkey, the most watched influencers are listed as follows (marketingtürkiye,2023)

Figure 2. Turkey's most watched Influencers in 2023

Channel name	Number of subscribers	Interaction rate	Average views
Porçay	1,070,0Q0	11.1%	790,179
Röportaj Adam	2,270,000	6.0%	2,230,584
Murat Soner	2,790,000	5.7%	2,524,569
Noluyo Ya ¿	4,510,000	5.2%	2,628,861
Ali Sürücü	1,650,000	2.5%	2,614,272

Source: (marketingturkiye, 2023).

8. Digital Games: Today's consumers, especially young consumers, use digital environments intensively. One of these mediums is digital games. The utilization of digital games can be in the form of product placement in the game for advertisers or acting together with game developers and ensuring the visibility of the brand during game design. In the research conducted, it was found that game users do not react negatively to product placement ads and do not perceive the ads as deceptive (Huang & Yang, 2012, p. 69). Having a presence in video games can provide significant advantages to a brand. Among these, creating awareness about the brand or organization, increasing the purchase intention of the players and

attracting the attention of the consumer can be counted as the most important benefits (Ghiruvu, 2012).

All these digital tools can be used to support an organization's public relations strategies and strengthen its brand image. An effective digital public relations strategy involves the right combination of these tools. Thus, you can increase your interaction with the target audience.

Corporate Advertising in Digital Public Relations: Effective Communication Strategies

Today, businesses are increasingly grasping the importance of digital public relations strategies. These strategies are used to increase brand awareness, strengthen customer loyalty, and establish deeper connections with target audiences. In this context, the role of corporate advertising in digital public relations is becoming increasingly important. Researchers such as Grunig (2005) have examined the new possibilities and transformations that digital technologies bring to the practice of public relations. Grunig's two-way public relations model, on the other hand, deals with corporate communication in harmony with the interactive nature of digital environments. The interactive structure of social media complements each other with Gruning's two-way symmetrical public relations model. Pavlik's study titled "New media technologies and public relations: Considering the consequences of the information highway" deals with the effects of digital media on public relations (as cited in Vercic et al., 2015). Therefore, as in traditional public relations and corporate advertising, digital public relations and corporate advertising require some strategic communication efforts. In this context, organizations that want to do corporate advertising in digital public relations should follow the following stages.

1. Target Audience Analysis: For a successful digital public relations strategy, it is important to first understand the target audience. It involves a thorough analysis to identify the target audience, understand their needs, interests, and online behaviour. This ensures that advertising campaigns and communication strategies are targeted correctly.

2. Brand Identity and Values: The antecedents of corporate advertising include a clear definition of brand identity and values. Brand identity provides a guideline for how the company defines itself, how it wants to appear to the target audience, and what values it represents. These values form the basis of advertising campaigns and communication strategies.

3. Content Strategy: A strong content strategy is required to be successful in digital public relations. The content strategy determines the content that the brand will use to engage with the target audience and how that content will be presented. Valuable, engaging, and authentic content can help connect with the target audience and increase brand awareness.

4. Integration: Harmony and consistency should be ensured between advertising campaigns, social media activities, content marketing and other communication activities. This is an important way to ensure that the credibility and consistency of the brand is increased.

5. Measurement and Evaluation: Although it is still a matter of debate whether measurement and evaluation is possible in traditional public relations, the digital world provides some advantages in this context. In the digital field, numerical values such as the number of clicks, likes or views of the communication efforts of the organization and the brand can be considered as a kind of measurement and evaluation tool. Measurement and analysis should be carried out on a regular basis to evaluate the success of a digital public relations strategy. Established metrics are used to evaluate the performance of advertising campaigns, content and other communication activities. This data provides important guidance for making strategic changes and improving future campaigns.

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Conclusion

In digital public relations, corporate advertising is an important tool for businesses to strengthen their brand communication and communicate effectively with their target audience. Research shows that these strategies provide significant advantages for businesses and have the potential to increase brand awareness and strengthen customer loyalty when used in conjunction with effective communication strategies. Some communication strategies should be determined for the effective use of corporate advertising in digital public relations. These strategies include elements such as target audience analysis, content marketing, social media management, and interaction analysis. These strategies will help businesses strengthen their brand image and communicate more effectively with their target audience in digital environments. The interactive nature of digital media will facilitate interaction and implementation of personalized communication efforts in terms of public relations and corporate advertising. Being able to

communicate directly and instantly with the target audience creates a positive environment for the image studies of organizations. However, on the other hand, the fact that digital channels can reach too many people at once can also cause the inability to manage the crisis in case of any crisis.

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THE IMPORTANCE AND TRANSFORMATION OF CORPORATE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

*Mahmut Mert ASLAN**

Introduction

Digitization, which provides instant access to large segments of society and the world, has not only facilitated the enhancement of corporate reputation but also reduced communication costs. Nowadays, there is an opportunity for easy, instantaneous, low-cost, and simultaneous communication between businesses and their target audiences. Consumers can instantly access products and services with an Internet-connected phone, share both positive and negative reviews, and even engage in manipulations (Çelebi, 2020: 110). Thus, digitalization and the concept of "reputation" are no longer limited to individuals. It is clear that in such a world, reputation is of great importance and value, not only at a social level but also at a corporate level. Moreover, it should be noted that the primary factors influencing the formation or dissolution of reputation are the social environment and stakeholders.

The concept of corporate reputation is known to represent an abstract value composed of the judgments, thoughts, feelings, impressions, and comments of all groups referred to as "stakeholders," rather than material existence. Its defining feature is its measurability. In measuring corporate reputation, both the organization's past practices and actions and its plans and visions are examined. This enables the assessment of a company's reputation and level of respect within society.

Corporate reputation is what sets an organization apart from others or makes it superior. From this perspective, it is understood that corporate reputation holds strategic importance in an environment of intense competition. Consequently, it becomes evident that building a corporate reputation is not an easy task. Reputation can be earned over a long period but lost in a short period. Therefore, it is clear that organizations concerned with their reputation must maintain principled, consistent, reliable, ho-

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nest, and transparent relationships with both their public and the wider community, and sustain this attitude steadily. On the other hand, they must have interactive relationships with their customers, in keeping with the nature of the digital age. The increasingly prevalent digital communication technology has made corporate reputation more crucial than ever. Therefore, organizations should allocate resources to digital communication technologies, employ teams specialized in information technology, and provide quick responses to customer requests and complaints.

It has become quite clear that businesses have no option but to use new information and communication technologies in digital public relations today. Moreover, effective use of digital technology is more critical for public relations than for any other area. In a digital age, conducting public relations work without utilizing these technologies is entirely unfeasible. In other words, a business's failure can be attributed to its failure or inadequate use of digital communication technology. Therefore, in today's management approach, the management of corporate reputation is becoming more and more important. In the era of digital public relations, where digital technology is significantly enhancing its importance, it is not difficult to predict that studies related to this topic are becoming more intense in both quantity and quality.

This study aims to show how online corporate reputation management has changed and grown in importance in the era of digital public relations made mandatory by globalization. This will shed light on the transformation of public relations in the digital age and its rapidly increasing importance, addressing some of the knowledge gaps seen so far on the subject.

In this context, some practical recommendations can be derived from the study. First, the results of the study effectively demonstrate how and in what direction online corporate reputation management has changed in the digital public relations era, what the importance of reputation management for organizations in the new era is, and what needs to be considered for more effective reputation management. Thus, the findings of this study are evaluated to provide a good framework for similar academic studies, companies, and political parties.

1-An Overview of the Post-Modern Era Initiated by the Internet and the Process of Globalization

With the onset of the Industrial Revolution in 1760, the Modern Era began, and the Post-Modern Era started with the advent of Internet technology in the 1990s. The Post-Modern Era has been referred to by various

names such as the "Digital Age", "Information Age", or "Communication Age."

The invention of writing introduced written communication; the invention of mass communication tools such as newspapers, radio, and television introduced mass communication; and with the globalization process that began in the 1990s, the digital communication era was inaugurated with the invention of digital technologies such as GSM, SMS, the Internet, and social media. Consequently, most sectors began utilizing new communication channels that emerged in communication and, naturally, largely abandoned traditional communication tools (Canöz & Canöz, 2018: 44).

In the post-modern era ushered in by the Internet, advances in communication technologies have inevitably led to profound changes in both personal and corporate communication and relationships. Digital communication tools, in addition to traditional media, have significantly aided organizations in reaching much larger target audiences. The elimination of all traditional barriers to communication and relationships due to globalization, the liberalization of trade on a global scale, and the integration of national economies with the world economy can be seen as a rare and significant opportunity that could enrich everyone, particularly the poorer segments (Stiglitz, 2004: 13).

Globalization has eliminated geographical boundaries and distances; made it possible to establish cross-border economic, social, cultural, political, and even personal human relationships; and, in summary, globalized everything that was once local. It represents a global communication and interaction network. On the other hand, with the rapid and intensive network of relationships established between national economies in this new era, interdependencies have increased at both individual and organizational levels, and local, regional, and global economic and commercial structures worldwide have begun to integrate into a single organism (Belu et al., 2018: 40).

Some scholars who have addressed the concept of globalization in its broadest sense evaluate the ongoing process based on the reality that economic, commercial, political, and social events, as well as decisions made in one part of the world, impact people and communities in all other regions (Held et al., 2003: 67-69). This suggests that digital communication technology, which has brought about a "communication revolution," is one of the most remarkable leaps in human history. As mentioned above, while the concept of globalization or the digital age began to emerge and be discussed theoretically in the 1960s, it became a practical phenomenon

in the 1990s, profoundly affecting the world in commercial, economic, political, cultural, and social aspects for decades. This multifaceted phenomenon continues to be debated in terms of its impacts, such as liberalizing trade and reaching a global scale, accelerating interactions in economic and commercial fields, providing transnational population amalgamation, escalating migrant flows, expanding the impact of terrorism, and triggering cultural capitalism that homogenizes human mentality and consumption habits (Tomlinson, 2013: 27). Some authors exhibit positive approaches to the phenomenon by emphasizing the fact that globalization provides a universal level of integration, while others criticize the process by arguing that this integration is a form of homogenization (Friedman, 2010: 31). Considering the views of other scholars and thinkers, it is possible to categorize approaches to the digital-dominated Post-Modern Era into roughly three groups: "supporters," "opponents," and "skeptics." It should be noted that the term "uncertainty" is frequently used by skeptics when defining the process. According to Bauman, who is among the skeptics, it is evident that the new type of uncertainty dominates humanity's mindset in the current fluid environment. Therefore, the Post-Modern Era drags humanity into a realm of perpetual and unavoidable uncertainty. The only thing that is clear here is that it is impossible to describe optimistically an environment in which everything is moving in the direction of uncertainty. The difficulty of making clear and healthy decisions in such an environment must be acknowledged (Bauman, 2013: 36). Russ, who shares a similar perspective with Bauman, expresses the chaos and uncertainty brought about by the process with the words, "In the 20th century, humanity has faced a general uncertainty, and unfortunately, humanity has long lost its paradise of certainties" (Russ, 2014: 18-19).

From the perspective of media transformation, it is observed that the asymmetric relationship between the source and the receivers during the traditional media era has roughly transformed into a symmetric relationship with digital communication. Communication strategies that previously occurred almost unidirectionally among individuals, groups, and organizations have now become multidirectional interactions. With the changes and advancements in information technologies, public relations professionals are increasingly utilizing mass communication tools to be more effective in their relationships with stakeholders and to reach wider target audiences. Therefore, there is no doubt that a significant transformation has occurred in public relations practices. In other words, the digital age has

transformed the understanding and practice of public relations, just as it has transformed all forms of communication.

2-The Rise of Digital Public Relations in the Communication Age

Numerous studies have been conducted on public relations, with various interpretations of the concept's definition and framework. This management process, aimed at enhancing relationships between organizations and the public, is planned systematically and for the long term. It can be summarized in terms of process as consisting of phases such as "analysis," "planning," "implementation," and "control." The fundamental goal of public relations is to create and develop a clear image in the public's mind as much as possible (Herbst, 2014: 238). Generally defined as the management of a company's relationship with the public, public relations is considered a strategic management function because it can influence stakeholder behavior to support or undermine corporate objectives. From this perspective, it is also possible to refer to public relations as "relationship management" (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998: 62).

The dynamic nature of public relations involves the increasingly widespread and effective use of new communication technologies. This not only expands its functional areas but also strengthens its relationships with target audiences (Kalender & Tarhan, 2009: 18). Given that social media platforms provide companies with opportunities to communicate and interact with current and potential customers, it is not difficult to predict that the involvement of large audiences in the relationship between companies and their publics has fundamentally changed approaches to relationship management. Consequently, it is also evident that both internal and external publics significantly contribute to the determination and development of companies' brands and product designs (Kozinets et al., 2010: 82). Today, public relations has acquired a digital character. The management of this relationship is no longer one-way but interactive. The ongoing interactive relationship occurs through mutual interaction via social media.

All active and passive engagements on organizational pages have measurable impacts on both customer-brand relationships and consumer behavior. Social networking sites provide continuous, active, and effective communication between businesses and their publics regarding online content sharing and sales (Godes & Mayzlin, 2009: 730; Jansen & Sobel, 2009: 2176; Boyd & Ellison, 2007: 219).

When considered together, it is clear that communication methods and strategies have significantly changed in the digital era that began with globalization. Today, public relations professionals strive to use websites, emails, digital newsletters, YouTube videos, viral marketing, RSS, blogs, podcasts, live conferences, and all known social media platforms to their optimal level. The greatest advantages of using digital channels can be summarized as saving time, reducing costs, and reaching much broader target audiences. On the other hand, this situation places certain pressures on public relations departments regarding accessibility, rapid feedback, and transparency. With the advent of Web 2.0 technologies, which brought search engines and writable web capabilities, real-time communication opportunities have emerged globally, and the necessity to bear the high costs of traditional mass communication tools has disappeared (Philips & Young, 2009: 6). As a result, anyone with literacy, a laptop or mobile phone, and an Internet connection can establish their communication channel and make their voice heard on a global scale. While global actors and companies engaged in mass production and marketing can reach even the remotest corners of the world through this channel, individuals living in the most remote areas can also express themselves globally or advertise their products. Although it is often said that global actors still have an advantage in such a world, providing ordinary individuals with global access is also significant. The question of whether global actors or ordinary citizens are more fortunate in this regard remains a serious topic of debate. In the digital public relations process, social media especially provides companies with the opportunity to market their brand as if it were a real person, helping them build closer and faster relationships with stakeholders (Yoo & Jeong, 2014: 7). It appears that, by its nature, social media has made mutual transparency inevitable. Information technology experts indicate that companies' moving away from formality and behaving like individuals to become transparent and engage in "face-to-face" contact with customers has strengthened their relationships with target audiences (Distaso & Bortree, 2012: 512). Thus, it is quite difficult to speak of corporate success because companies have moved from a one-way relationship with their customers to a two-way interaction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010: 61). However, it is also worth noting that there are studies suggesting social media may not be as effective in reciprocal communication and relationship building as assumed. Some research shows that a significant portion of participants use a company's social media profile primarily for receiving one-way notifications from the company and are not very willing to actively

participate in communication by asking questions, sharing posts on their profiles, or making brief comments (Tsai & Men, 2013: 84). Social media is widely used by businesses and advertisers to engage with target audiences and increase communication, but contrary to popular belief, these efforts may not be very effective. However, it can be said that this is related to how and how actively companies use their social media channels. Nevertheless, it is pointless and unnecessary to question the fact that social media has become a primary channel in establishing, maintaining, and developing both individual and corporate relationships and is highly effective today.

In other words, the emergence of an interactive media environment through the Internet and Web 2.0 communication technologies has enabled almost all businesses, shareholders, suppliers, political parties, non-governmental organizations, and even local citizens to freely obtain and comment on information about other institutions, organizations, or entities using the same technologies. Social media allows customers direct access to information and freely share personal observations, experiences, and comments about companies (Sodhi & Tang, 2019: 2948-2952). On these platforms, both positive and negative comments about organizations can be easily seen not only by stakeholders but also by current and potential target audiences. Of course, this interactive communication network results in some unavoidable outcomes for organizations. In this context, it is easy to see that organizations and institutions are subject to significant public pressure, which forces them to communicate directly and interactively with the public and stakeholders, to be transparent, accountable, self-regulating, and continuously improving.

In the traditional media era, organizational officials could defend the institution's image and reputation through asymmetrical communication by placing ads and announcements in newspapers and television channels, or by making necessary statements through the same media in case of issues. However, in the new era where the entire national public, and even many people living abroad, can intervene in real-time via social media, this has become more challenging than ever (Oliver, 2007: 52). As previously mentioned, it is clear that institutions and organizations are under significant pressure to become as transparent as possible due to the pressures of digital communication. They have seen the difficulty of survival for introverted organizations in the new era (Scott, 2010: 29).

3-Conceptual Framework and General Approaches to Corporate Reputation Management

Similar to other disciplines, numerous scientific studies and research have been conducted on corporate reputation management. This section will discuss specific definitions of the concept of online corporate reputation that have emerged to date. To better understand the term, it should first be noted that "corporate reputation" is used in the global literature and means "corporate fame."

Corporate reputation represents the collective emotional and cognitive responses that managers, investors, employees, and, broadly speaking, both internal and external stakeholders have toward an organization's name. It reflects the institution's level, appearance, appeal, history, record, and vision for the future in comparison to its competitors within the same sector (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004: 36-37; Çerçi, 2022: 68; Kreps & Wilson, 1982:). In other words, corporate reputation plays a critical role in shaping the general image of the organization as perceived by society.

It seems that a company's reputation is the result of years of superior skill, effort, and dedication. Given that a company's reputation is established through successful and trustworthy actions, it can be predicted that prestige and fame will increase, business volume will grow, and brand value will rise (Davies, 2002: 419). This is because the term "corporate reputation" refers to intangible, non-tradable elements that provide a competitive advantage in industrial competition (Petrick et al., 1999: 56-70).

In general terms, online corporate reputation refers to the total of intangible supporting investments made in areas such as improving quality standards, strengthening stakeholder relationships, enhancing customer loyalty, and improving corporate image, in addition to financial investments in public relations, advertising, and marketing. Previously, more value was placed on tangible assets within organizations; however, with the onset of the digital age, concerns about the organization's reputation and its development and sustainability in national and global public perceptions have become prominent. In other words, today it is observed that all of a company's tangible assets revolve around the concept of "reputation" (Davies, 2002: 414-416). Thus, maintaining, sustaining, and developing a company's presence entirely depends on its reputation. In the digital age, no organization is beyond the scrutiny of society; rather, all are under intense monitoring and pressure from both internal and external public spheres. However, consumers, who possess relatively less information about the characteristics and quality of products, are inevitably influenced

by the advertising and promotional content published under the company's public relations activities. It must be acknowledged that these types of communications delivered more through digital media are extremely functional and vital for increasing trust in the company and strengthening its corporate image and reputation. Public relations activities aimed at strengthening image and reputation increase the communication density among the company's managers, stakeholders, customers, employees, investors, and competitors, thus creating a mutually reinforcing two-way spiral.

It is a fact that all stakeholders have different interests and thus different perceptions of the organization. For example, consumers are concerned with the variety, quality, content, reliability, and pricing of the company's products and services, as well as increasingly the company's social policies and ethical stance. Investors are primarily concerned with the company's financial structure and strength. Employees, on the other hand, focus on the company's personnel policies, such as working conditions and pay. From the perspective of corporate reputation, the company must carefully consider the desires, needs, and expectations of all stakeholder groups (Gray & Balmer, 1998:). Thus, online corporate reputation is a situation with different meanings and benefits for all stakeholders; however, it undoubtedly holds great importance for everyone. From a sociological perspective, corporate reputation can be viewed as proof and indicator of legitimacy for the company. It shows the content of the deviation between corporate standards and stakeholder expectations and the momentum of overall performance. Viewed from a multidisciplinary perspective, it can be easily argued that corporate reputation management is a "collective image" (Bromley, 2001: 317). Economists see corporate reputation as related to product quality and prices, while marketing experts argue that it should be evaluated based on the organization's reliability and brand value. Regardless of the perspective, there is no disagreement that the concept of corporate reputation is, at least, the result of the company's past actions (Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001: 228).

Factors that relatively provide advantages to organizations in sustainable reputation management include adherence to ethical values, quality of products and services, environmental sensitivity, social responsibility, employee training, financial performance, and leadership. In the increasingly competitive environment of the digital age, consumers have become much more aware and sensitive. From this, it can be said that customers classify and evaluate companies not only in terms of products and services

but also in terms of fame and reputation. In this regard, it is understood that the criteria of the digital age include not only established tangible criteria but also spiritual or abstract criteria (Tucker & Melewar, 2005: 377). Every business operating in a sector must inevitably communicate and interact with all segments of society. It should not be overlooked that some of these relationships may bring risks to the organization over time, as it is not possible to predict what will happen to stakeholders in the future. In this context, it should not be forgotten that activities related to reputation management are also risk management activities (Murray, 2003: 143).

To summarize more coherently, activities to enhance corporate reputation can be categorized into "corporate identity studies," "corporate image studies," and "corporate advertising studies." The benefits these activities provide to the organization can be summarized as follows: a. Strengthens brand loyalty among consumers. b. Provides easier and cheaper credit opportunities. c. Offers competitive advantages to the business. d. Facilitates retaining suppliers. e. Strengthens and makes the corporate structure more effective. f. Provides sales advantages. g. Eases finding and employing qualified personnel (www.ticariyer.com).

From a strategic perspective, the importance of corporate reputation underscores the difficulty of acquiring invisible values compared to the ease of obtaining visible resources. Such invisible values have a deeper impact on providing the organization with a superior image, position, and differentiation compared to other factors. Thus, it is clear that these non-visible factors are among the most important competitive tools for enhancing the overall appearance and performance of organizations in the digital age. At this point, the concept of corporate reputation comes to the forefront (Carmeli & Tisher, 2004: 1267).

Corporate reputation management involves reviewing past positive activities and impressions to forecast and project the organization's future. This approach helps create a perception that the business is reputable and trustworthy in society, thereby increasing interest in the organization's products and services in the long term (Kotha et al., 2001: 572). Having a positive reputation and image means creating a strong positive impression in the minds of all stakeholders that the organization has been operating in the sector for a long time, is a well-established entity, is reliable, has good management, has proven quality in its products and services, and is transparent, responsible, and honest towards society. This way, the organization gains a visible advantage over its competitors in market activities. In other words, the greatest dynamic in rising to a superior and advantageous posi-

tion among all firms sending signals to the public is online corporate reputation. It is through the online corporate reputation that the unfair competitive conditions arising from information asymmetry in markets can be overcome. Institutions that have high corporate reputations are often preferred without hesitation by other organizations operating in different sectors or those who have never interacted with the organization before when needed. A company's positive reputation creates the impression that it is experienced, has market dominance, produces information and strategies, and more importantly, adapts and utilizes them according to changing market conditions. This situation demonstrates that online corporate reputation is a leading factor in gaining a competitive advantage (Lichtenthaler & Ernst, 2007: 37-55; Weigelt & Camerer, 1988: 447).

After the widespread use of the Internet worldwide, social media, which has become increasingly popular, has given corporate reputation efforts a new speed and dimension. Through social media sites, which offer more interactive communication opportunities and are cost-effective, companies have started to develop new communication and relationship strategies (Gardberg & Fombrun, 2002: 305). Corporate reputation is the total of perceptions and comments accumulated in the minds of stakeholders over time regarding a company's image, quality, and characteristics. In the information age, the concept of "online corporate reputation" has grown in importance and value in digital public relations (Croft & Dalton, 2003: 9).

Various scales have been developed to determine and assess the level of online corporate reputation. Among these, the most well-known is the "reputation quotient." This scale is widely accepted as a measurement tool that considers various dimensions of the "reputation" concept, including both financial and non-financial data and collects views from various stakeholder groups such as business owners, employees, investors, and consumers. Therefore, it is known that this method is widely used by researchers in many countries (Groenland, 2002: 308-315).

4-Online Corporate Reputation Management in Digital Public Relations

The reputation of companies is closely tied to their brand values and, consequently, their overall corporate values. Companies need to build and maintain a strong reputation, which requires consistent policies across all areas, in order to achieve sustainable profitability. In this context, it is crucial to create a consumer-oriented differentiation in the products or services offered. This can enhance a company's reputation and give it a compe-

titive edge in the industry, demonstrating that a company's most valuable asset is its reputation. Essentially, the core and aim of public relations activities in organizations are to enhance and disseminate corporate reputation. In the digital age, managing corporate reputation online has become a biological necessity. If a company can elevate its reputation as a good corporate citizen, it will be better positioned to withstand external threats and challenges. Thus, investing in reputation is more valuable than anything else, as it provides the company with significant mobility and competitive advantage wherever and whenever needed. Current discussions and research have gained significant momentum regarding how the rapidly evolving digital communication technologies impact and transform corporate reputation management in public relations.

In the literature, evaluations of corporate reputation clearly show that the organization is considered as an organizational entity. This approach is analyzed from the perspective of resource dependency. According to the resource dependency approach, the more developed an organization's ability to access limited resources quickly and effectively, the greater its strategic advantage compared to its competitors (Deephouse, 2000: 1092). In this sense, corporate reputation is the most important strategic resource with the potential to provide significant future benefits to an organization; however, this powerful resource is also quite fragile. As difficult as it is to gain, it is equally possible and likely to lose (Hall, 1993: 607-618; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001: 229).

In today's world, it is undeniable that successful organizations perceive online communication strategies as the most effective dynamic for achieving success. Many studies show that most ordinary people base their decisions about brands and products on online likes and comments and their opinions about a brand are similarly formed (De Vries et al., 2012: 87). Therefore, there is a widespread and justified belief that organizations which quickly decode the digital world and develop new strategies based on current data achieve higher visibility and reputation, thus gaining an edge. One of the areas most affected by the rapid advancement of digital communication technologies is public relations, and naturally, public relations practices have undergone a profound and permanent transformation in the new era. However, digital communication technologies also entail certain risks. Therefore, organizations are compelled to employ expert teams in communication and information technologies. Organizations that are unwilling or unable to succeed in this area have no chance of sustaining their existence. Thus, it is increasingly evident that developing governance

skills and communication strategies suitable for the current conditions is crucial in digital public relations.

The term "corporate reputation" functions as an encompassing umbrella. It includes strategies such as creating corporate identity, establishing an attractive image, building respect, raising awareness about the brand, and managing that awareness. Corporate reputation can be seen as extending to the organization's roots. It is a fact that the role of digital public relations in reputation management has become more significant than ever. Accordingly, public relations professionals' workload, effectiveness, and power have increased significantly. Given that social media is a primary communication channel facilitating unlimited sharing and dissemination of observations, experiences, information, comments, and critiques, it is possible to predict that information and comments shared on social media platforms, where the public is actively involved, can either strengthen or weaken corporate reputation.

For this reason, large enterprises use more social media accounts compared to small businesses, thus providing quicker responses to requests and complaints from consumer audiences (Becker & Lee, 2019: 237). It seems that today, digital communication technology, or digital media, particularly social media, has become the most important tool in digital public relations. In other words, when it comes to digital media in public relations, social media platforms are the most prominent. Social media, which has now become mainstream in the digitalization process, plays a dominant role in giving voice, self-expression, advertising and propaganda for both individuals and organizations. Compared to other managers, it was not difficult to predict that public relations professionals would engage more with new communication technologies and dedicate more time to this area in the new era. Indeed, this has happened. Today, organizational managers seek ways to use social media effectively to enhance their corporate reputation as much as possible and consider allocating resources to this endeavor indispensable.

With social media becoming the primary communication channel, not only communication methods but also relationship methods have changed significantly. In a multifaceted, interactive communication environment, numerous contents are produced and made accessible to broad audiences. Thus, observations, experiences, emotions, thoughts, and both positive and negative critiques can be shared instantly and freely. This situation influences and alters the ways public relations professionals interact and communicate with target audiences in many ways. From this point

forward, the dominant perspective in research and studies on digital public relations has been one that emphasizes corporate reputation, to the extent that reputation management has become nearly as valuable as financing. Certainly, in digital public relations, enhancing interaction and receiving prompt feedback through corporate websites, corporate blogs, and online newsletters also play significant roles.

Corporate websites are one of the digital tools of great importance in reaching wide audiences and managing sustainable corporate image and reputation. The visual appeal and content organization of the site are crucial for its success. For operational websites, features related to tracking order progress are especially important; however, customer relationship features are most critical. In this context, creating an image and product selection requires deep awareness and sensitivity. This is followed by online ordering and online delivery. Some studies indicate that corporate websites enhance organizational performance and that organizations can improve website performance throughout the customer purchasing process. In terms of indicators such as customer satisfaction and loyalty, it can easily be said that a successful corporate website plays a vital role in converting customer performance into financial performance. Companies derive significant benefits from websites designed to meet customer needs and desires (Hoekstra et al., 2015: 90). Today, no company denies that having a well-designed website that maximally addresses the desires and needs of all stakeholders is essential for a better image and reputation. Nevertheless, as a requirement of the digital age, corporate websites also need to be frequently updated.

"Online newsletters," traditionally known as "press releases," are another communication channel used in digital public relations. It is worth noting that the purpose and target audiences of online newsletters have distinctly changed in the digital media era. Thus, as a new online communication channel, online newsletters have become a widely used communication tool by digital public relations and marketing experts (Vorvoreanu, 2008: 93). In fact, newsletters are one of the traditional communication tools and have been updated with the development of digital communication technologies over time. Before the 1990s, newsletters were published via television, radio, and newspapers, but now they are conducted through digital communication tools. In other words, this change has been at the functional rather than the instrumental level. Online newsletters are known to consist of three basic elements: the "headline," "introduction," and "body text." This way, current and potential target audiences receive

up-to-date information about the organization (Vorvoreanu, 2008: 96). In short, online newsletters can raise awareness about the organization, increase the visibility of the organization's name, inform consumer audiences about products, and improve the organization's image and reputation (Newman & Thomas, 2008: 216).

Companies also enhance their functionality in digital public relations through blogs, enabling them to reach broader target audiences and strengthen their corporate reputation. Blogs are platforms that can be designed more quickly, updated faster, and thus facilitate quicker and more transparent interactions. Likely, the most appealing aspect for consumer audiences is their simplicity of use, dynamic nature, and the ease and speed of changing design and content.

Today, everyone is a social media user. Thus, effectively assessing feedback from social media users has become the most crucial parameter in forming a corporate reputation. Considering this as a virtual reputation is not a realistic approach. Today, all personal and corporate relationships occur in the virtual environment. However, it is also not possible to claim that all reputation activities have been transferred to digital media. Some reputation-building activities from the old media era that are still useful can also be mentioned. One example is a method used to highlight how long a company has been operational, thus emphasizing its experience compared to other companies in the industry. Phrases such as "Since 1960" on some company logos are a typical example of this.

Conclusion

No study is free from the limitations imposed by its conditions. The factor that constrains the findings of this study is its reliance on a literature review. Participatory and non-participatory observations, experiences, or field research in the area could have provided much more concrete and detailed findings.

The astonishing developments in digital communication technologies during the 1990s eliminated all physical barriers to communication worldwide, naturally removing barriers between organizations and the public as well. It can be said that this process has had very significant outcomes. Primarily, a new era of instant, barrier-free, widespread, and interactive communication has begun. Indeed, even face-to-face meetings are now facilitated in the digital environment. Moreover, communication costs have decreased, and there has been a fundamental change in the communication strategies of organizations. In this context, it is undoubtedly true

that the digital revolution initiated an interactive and transparent relationship model between organizations and their target audiences.

One of the most significant developments in the transformation of communication strategies, as necessitated by the digital age, is related to online corporate reputation management. Reputation management, as a public relations activity, involves a set of strategies used to positively influence stakeholders and the public's perceptions of an organization. It is the process of monitoring and managing the organization's online presence. Improving, enhancing, and developing the public perception of the organization, or its reputation and image, allows it to stand out among competitors and attract new customer segments. More importantly, corporate reputation management in contemporary public relations is conducted entirely through digital media.

Despite the numerous benefits, conveniences, and advantages that digital public relations offer compared to traditional media, online corporate reputation management, which has become the sole method, also comes with its unique challenges. One of the most significant challenges is the rapid, transparent, and interactive nature of relationships between organizations and the public in the new era. In other words, digital communication channels have imposed heavy public scrutiny and pressure on all organizations. Consumers have evolved from passive readers, listeners, and viewers to active participants who give instant feedback, intervene, comment, criticize, voice their requests and complaints, and share content. Therefore, there is no doubt that companies with a high level of awareness and sensitivity regarding online corporate reputation management and who develop public relations activities in line with the spirit of the digital age are significantly more advantageous and durable in the market compared to their competitors.

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CRISIS COMMUNICATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF IMAGE RESTORATION THEORY: THE CASE OF KIZILAY

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Introduction

For organizations to sustain their existence and preserve their reputation during time of crisis, it is crucial to prepare an effective crisis communication plan and manage communications according to the plan. Especially during the crisis, the need for accessing information becomes more evident. Throughout this process, maintaining communication with stakeholders affected by the crisis is essential, and all communication channels should be actively used to provide on-time updates.

Effective crisis communication goes beyond controlling the crisis process and carries the potential to transform it into an opportunity to strengthen the organization's reputation. During this process, it is important to share complete and accurate information and to address stakeholders' concerns with understanding. In crisis management, the fundamental principle is conducting an open communication. Successfully managed open communication can enhance the organization's credibility and minimize negative impacts. Negligence or sharing misinformation in crisis management might result in a loss of trust among stakeholders. During the crisis showing sensitivity and a human-centered approach are also important. Respecting stakeholders' concerns during the crisis shows that the organization empathizes with stakeholders and takes responsibility.

Corporate image refers to the thoughts, feelings, and information that arise in the minds of stakeholders as a result of interactions with the institution, enabling clear perceptions about the institution. Companies allocate large budgets and make significant efforts to enhance their image, considering the potential of a positive corporate image to foster trust, customer satisfaction, and loyalty. Conversely, a negative image can lead to cus-

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tomer loss and the erosion of the institution's credibility. Therefore, companies place great importance on shaping their corporate image by employing qualified and educated personnel.

With the emergence of news in traditional and social media about the Kızılay selling tents to the AHBAP Association following the earthquake centered in Kahramanmaraş on February 6, 2023, a crisis ensued. Later, the crisis further escalated with the subsequent debate on the social media platform Twitter (X) between Kızılay President Kerem Kınık and Şahan Gökbakar. In this context, this study evaluates the crisis experienced by Kızılay on Twitter within the framework of image restoration theory and analyzes Kızılay's Twitter posts from February 1, 2023, to July 31, 2023, using content analysis. The study assesses why the crisis emerged, which message or event triggered the crisis, and how the institution projected its image during the crisis period based on the collected data.

1. Crisis

A crisis is defined as an urgent situation that must be addressed immediately, occurring outside the control of the organization, threatening the organization's existence as well as its products and services, and capable of producing unexpected results (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993, p. 48). Crisis is a negative event that suddenly arises, causes tension in organizations or individuals, and causes the operations of organizations to be ineffective (Tekvar, 2016, p. 200). The term "crisis" comes from the Greek word "krisis", which means decision or to differentiate/separate (Glaesser, 2006, p. 1). In Chinese crisis means a threat or oppurtunity. In other words, there are threats and oppurtunities in a crisis. What is important is whether the organization is managing the crisis effectively or not. In order to manage the crisis effectively, it is necessary to conduct a detailed analysis of the events that led to the crisis (Okay & Okay, 2013, p. 73; 352), and share the process with public through traditional ways and social media and manage communication transparently.

The common characteristics of crises crucial for organizations (Çınarlı, 2016, p. 97) are as follows (Akat, Budak, & Budak, 1999, p. 335):

- Affects a wide range of stakeholders.
- Requires a rapid response and creates time pressure.
- Crises comes as a suprise and are unpredictable, rendering the company's crisis prevention methods insufficient.
- Indicates an environment full of uncertainty and situations where the effects are not clear.

- The authority to make decisions causes stress and tension within individuals.

There are causes for the occurence of crisis but certain signs can be observed before the crisis. Burnett (1998, p. 476) describes this situation by stating that crises are often not unexpected; they provide early warning signs, but their precise future cannot be predicted in advance. Therefore, the companies should work on emergency crisis scenarios to prevent crisis and should meet the requirements of proactive communication.

The reasons for the crises changes according to type of crises. The table below (see Table 1) describes the types of crises and some events that cause crises (Mitroff & Anagnos, 2000, pp. 34-35):

Table 1. Types of Crises and Causes of Crises

Types of Crises	Causes of Crises
Economical	Workers' strike Workers causing disturbance at the workplace Insufficient work availability (lack of work as required) Uncertainty and decline in stock values Rapid spread of major bankruptcies in the market/stock exchange Significant reductions in earnings (revenue/profit)
Information-Related	Hiding information and losing patents or registrations False information Illegaly changing the computer records Loss of critical information from computers belonging to customers, suppliers, or similar entities
Physical Losses	Loss or distribution of important assests, materials and equipment Closing significant plants or facilities Interruptions or failures in major production facilities
Human-Related Issues	Loss of a valuable senior executive Loss of an important employee Increase in absence Increase in accidents Damaging public property Violence in the workplace
Reputation-Related Issues	Slanders, rumors Unpleasant jokes, gossip Damage to the company's image Changing the logo of the company
Actions	Altering or damaging the product Kidnapping, hostage-taking Terrorism, violence in the workplace
Natural Disasters	Earthquakes, fires, floods Explosions, typhoons, hurricanes

The "stage approach" is used in the analysis of crisis (Örnek & Aydın, 2008, p. 21). According to Guth & Marsh (2007, p. 397), the stages of crisis management include *the point of no return* (where crises are generally unpredictable and require a reactive approach), *the warning stage* (where many crises do not occur suddenly but often have problems and warning signs), *improvement* (where focus shifts towards managing damage and opportunities arise to reduce losses) and *return to normalcy* (accepted that crises are unpredictable and require a reactive approach) (Guth & Marsh, 2007, p. 397). Reviewing the literature, Guth and Marsh (2007) adresses the stages of crisis as *the point of no return, warning stage, improvement and return to normalcy*; Carrol and Buchholtz (2008) *initial signs of the crisis, acute crisis stage, chronic crisis stage, and resolution stage*; Heller and Darling (2012) categorize them as *initial crisis, severe crisis, chronic crisis, and crisis resolution*. Although researchers use different names for the stages of crisis, it is understood that the content is essentially the same.

The effectiveness of crisis management is crucial for reducing damage and seizing opportunities during a crisis. It is a process that entails predicting the crisis's length, implementing essential measures, and assessing the situation to achieve beneficial outcomes for the organization (Aksu, 2010, p. 55).

2. Image

Image is an abstract concept that is formed by the emotions, experiences, and influences from the environment that individuals create in their minds. It has countless definitions that vary from person to person, resulting in numerous meanings (Silsüpür, 2015, pp. 263-288).

Image is defined as the visual or graphic representation in people's minds. It refers to the visual impression or description that a person or object creates in people's memories and expresses how people think about, remember, and perceive any person or object (Robins, 1999, p. 21).

Image expresses an individual's personalized feelings (Morello, 1983, p. 1), the sum of attitudes and impressions that a person or group holds about an individual, country, institution, brand, or product (Kapferer, 2008, p. 174) Image consists of the thoughts formed in people's perceptions of various subjects.

Based on the inferences drawn from symbols, behaviors, and communication processes (Bronn, 2002, p. 5) multiple elements influence the image formed in individuals' perceptions (Silsüpür, 2020, p. 109). These are; level of information, oppurtunities and services provided alongside

with the judgments held by the individual. Level of information refers to the information that an individual acquires through various channels, such as communication and cultural processes; *existing judgements* are based on their evaluations of specific topics, people, or object; *provided opportunities and services* are shaped by factors that vary with the cultural environment, political system, historical context, and economic conditions in which individuals are situated (Tolongüç, 1992, p. 11-12). Therefore, objective information or images formed based on an individual's personal evaluations do not arise suddenly. Instead, they are shaped as a result of the various elements coming together within individuals' memory (Özüpek, 2005, p. 101). Although the image develops over time in individuals' mind, they can be quickly forgotten. In this regard, organizations, brands, cities, or individuals need to manage the perceptions of their target audiences and maintain a positive image.

For a positive image organizations must clearly disclose their identity, philosophy, goals, actions, management quality, future plans, responsibilities and growth expectations to similar organizations, stakeholders, and the public. Businesses that implement these practices enhance their public image and achieve market leadership (Gregory & Wiechmann, 1993, p. 38). Consequently, organizations either succeed or fail based on the impressions they leave in the minds of their target audiences (Trout, 2007, p. 223).

3. Crisis and Image Relationship

Crisis periods are significant opportunities for organizations to strengthen their image and build trust. During crises, institutions need to manage the situation with long-term strategies in relation to stakeholders such as employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and investors (Kadıbeşegil, 2009) and develop crisis plans taking all stakeholders into account is essential.

Organizations that have undergone or recovered from a crisis have learned that managing image is a continuous and active process. This process includes fast and effective communications, media management and stakeholder relations during the crisis. Society tends to be more forgiving towards organizations with strong image amid a crisis. Thus, now organizations recognize that image is a form of capital and investing in it is important for long-term success. Establishing reputation capital not only increases the credibility and sustainability of organizations but also puts them into better positions in crisis (Alsop, 2004, p. 25). In this regard, compa-

nies should put an emphasis on corporate identity practises for managing corporate image and reputation, fulfill their responsibilities, foster trust in society through their actions and be postively remembered.

The 2001 financial crisis demonstrated how important it is for a company to have a positive image, and how quickly the loss of credibility and damage to the company's reputation can lead to a significant decline in value. The collapse of companies such as Enron, Global Crossings and Tyco International, as well as the major firm Arthur Andersen, when it was revealed that their top executives had manipulated financial reports, serves as an example of this. Other international companies, such as Vivence from France, a major Dutch food company Royald Ahold, Parmalat, Shell Group from Italy these companies have also faced similar problems. If the images of these companies had been measured, analyzed, managed and the results evaluated, the scale of the crises they experienced would likely have been smaller and even the crisis might have been prevented (Tansala, 2005, s.31).

4. Methods

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) managed the crisis that emerged after the news of selling tents to the AHBAP association was emerged on Twitter (X) following the earthquake on February 6, 2023, and to analyze the impact of this situation on the organization's image. In this context, Kızılay's Twitter account was examined using content analysis methods from February 1 to July 31, 2023.

The content analysis method is used to examine and analyze the content of texts, documents, and records according to specific rules and methods within a framework of objective criteria. This method is used to identify the explicit content of communications, including the messages, concepts, themes, and patterns expressed in texts. Researchers use content analysis to systematically organize, categorize, and interpret data by examining texts in detail (Fiske, 1996, p. 176).

The coding guide for the study was created by drawing on the works of Canpolat & Şahiner (2017) and Duğan (2018). The coding guide includes the appearance of Kızılay's Twitter account and the content of the post. In the study, Kızılay's twitter account, an SCO in Turkey, was examined according to image restoration theory.

Image Restoration Theory: Image is a crucial concept not only for individuals but also for organizations. An organization's positive image can qu-

ickly turn into a negative one when not managed properly during crisis. Companies uses variety of tactics to improve their image over time. Image restoration theory refers to strategies aimed at positively utilizing and enchancing an organation's image (Benoit, 1997, s. 178).

The purpose of this theory is to maintain and rebuild the positive image. The image restoration theory which used in issues that can damage the reputation of organizations aims to identifty what harms and affects an organization's reputation and image, determine how to adress the masses, and specify who needs to be persuaded (Çınarlı, 2016, pp. 49-50).

In image restoration theory, it is crucial for organization leader to prioritize the problems they encounter and to determine the communication language, tools, and methods they use to address these issues (Çetin & Toprak, 2016, p. 58). In this context, the image restoration theory is divided into five strategies; denial, evading responsibility, reducing the offensiveness of the act, corrective action, and acceptance (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000, p. 165).

Table 2. Image Restoration Strategies and Their Characteristics

Strategies	Characteristics
1. Denial	
a) Simple Denial	Stating that company is not at fault.
b) Shifting the Blame	Claiming that the fault lies with someone else.
2. Evading Responsibility	
a) Provocation	The organization focuses on making the mistake seem understandable.
b) Defeasibility	Stating that the mistake was due to lack of information.
c) Accident	The mistake was a result of bad luck.
d) Good Intentions	Asserting that the fault, despite being a mistake, was done with good intentions.
3. Reducing Offensiveness	
a) Bolstering	Emphasizing the good qualities or past positive attributes of the activity despite the mistake.
b) Minimization	Indicates that the damage caused by the mistake is very small.
c) Differentiation	The mistake caused less damage than similar faults made by other organizations.
d) Transcendence	The benefits obtained from the activity are more important than the damages caused by the mistake.
e) Attack the Accuser	Efforts are made to minimize the credibility of those making accusations about the mistake.
f) Compensation	Compensation or costs are paid to the victims.
4. Corrective Action	The issue is resolved, and efforts are made to prevent it from recurring.
5. Acceptance	An apology is issued for the mistake.

(Benoit, 1997, p. 179)

Denial: The organization asserts that it did not cause the fault and did not experience a crisis (Benoit, 1997, p. 179). If the organization bases its strategy on innocence, it might use defenses such as "We didn't do it"; if based on misunderstanding, it might say "You confused us with others"; and if it concerns assigning blame, it might argue "They did it" (Suher, 2019, p. 126).

Evading Responsibility: This is divaded into four elements. These are; provocation, defeasibility, accident, and good intentions. In provocation, the organization's behavior is a reaction to the aggresive actions of others. The organization's approach is to react to provocation with a contrary logic. In defeasibility, the organization says that it does not have authority over the situation or key staff and states there is a lack of information. In the accident, the organization tries to convince the target audience that the event causing the crisis happened by chance or accident. The organization claims that it has exposed to the crisis, and explains it with good intentions, and aims to resolve the cause of crisis (Çakır, 2014, p. 87-89).

Reducing Offensiveness: In a crisis environment, the aim is to reduce the negative perceptions of the organization among target audiences and stakeholders (Çetin & Toprak, 2016, p. 58).

Corrective Action: It involves checking whether the organization fulfills the promises made to target audiences through its actions (Benot, 1997, p. 180).

Acceptance: Individuals or organizations accept the fault and issue an apology for it (Masaviru, 2016, p. 29).

From the content of the posts shared on Kızılay's Twitter account; posts related to claims of selling tents after the February 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquake fall under the *denial* category; posts adressing claims of delayed aid after the earthquake are in the evading category; posts made to refute claims that Kızılay sold tents and sold donated blood for profit are in the *reducing offensiveness* category; posts related to the issues arising from the crisis and the subsequent posts about the dismissal of the Kızılay president are in the *corrective action* category; the dismissal of the Kızılay president and the posts about the new president are evaluated under the *acceptence* category.

The research questions of the study examined according to image restoration theory are as follows:

Research Questions
1. How is the overall appearance of Kızılay's Twitter account?

2. Does Kızılay deny the crisis in its Twitter posts?

3. Does Kızılay evade responsibility for the crisis in its Twitter posts?

4. Does Kızılay attempt to minimize the negative aspects of the crisis in its Twitter posts?

5. Are there corrective actions related to the crisis in Kızılay's Twitter posts?

6. Does Kızılay accept crisis in its Twitter posts?

5. Findings

Overall Appearance of Kızılay's Twitter Account

In the study Kızılay's official Twitter account was analyzed and informations presented in the Table 3.

Table 3. Overall Appearance of Kızılay's Twitter Account (as of January 1, 2024)

SCO	Date of Join	Amount of Tweets	Following	Followers	Verified Account	Corporate Logo	Information on Webpages
Kızılay	January 2010	32.5k	77	1.7 Mn	Yes	Yes	Yes

It was seen that Kızılay opened its account on Janıuary 10, posted 32.567 tweets, follows 77 people, and has 1.117.064 followers. It was determined that Kızılay has a verified account, uses the organization's logo on its profile, and includes information about its web pages.

Table 4. Amount of Tweets Kızılay Shared on Twitter

Content	f	%
Number of tweets related to crisis	10	2
Number of tweets not related to crisis	588	98
Total	**598**	**100**

During the study period from February 1-July 31, 2023, Kızılay shared a total of 598 tweets. Of these, 10 tweets (2%) were specifically related to the crisis, while 588 tweets (98%) contained information on current updates.

Table 5. Image Restoration Theories Used by Kızılay

Strategy	Image Restoration Theories Used by Kızılay	
	f	%
1. Denial		
a) Simple Denial	57	9,5
b) Shifting the Blame	-	
2. Evading Responsibility		
a) Provocation	195	32,6

b) Defeasibility	9	1,5
c) Accident	11	1,8
d) Good Intentions	99	16,5
3. Reducing Offensiveness		
a) Bolstering	184	30,7
b) Minimization	-	
c) Differentiation	-	
d) Transcendence	35	5,8
e) Attack the Accuser	-	
f) Compensation	-	
4. Corrective Action	7	1,1
5. Acceptance	1	0,1
Total	**598**	**100**

During the research period, Kızılay used image restoration theory messages strategies in 598 posts related to the crisis. These messages included 57 (%9.5) simple denial, 195 (%32.6) provocation, 9 (%1.5) deficiency, 11 (%1.8) accident, 99 (%16.5) good intentions, 184 (%30.7) bolstering, 35 (%5.8) superiority, 7 (%1.1) corrective action, and 1 (%0.1) acceptance strategies. It was determined that the most frequently used strategies in the posts was bolstering under the category of reducing offensiveness and provocation under the category of evading responsibility, while the least used strategies were acceptance and corrective action.

The overall proportions of the image restoration theory strategies used by Kızılay during the research period are presented below.

Table 6. The Total Proportions of Strategies Used in Image Restoration Theory

Strategy	Image Restoration Theories Used by Kızılay	
	f	**%**
Denial	57	9,5
Evading Responsibility	314	52,5
Reducing Offensiveness	219	36,8
Corrective Action	7	1,1
Acceptance	1	0,1
Total	**598**	**100**

As it can be seen on Table 6 the most used strategies used by Kızılay are as follows; %52,5 evading responsibility and %36,4 reducing offensiveness. These are followed by denial at 9.5%, corrective action at 1.1%, and acceptance at 0.1%.

Conclusion

Crises impact the organization from the moment they occur. Effectively managed crisis communication positively affects an organization's image, while poorly managed crisis communication damages the image. Effective and efficient crisis management requires; transparency, taking responsibility, a solution-oriented approach, and maintaining communication and interaction with the public. Due to the impact of the social media, crises quickly reach large audiences. Thus, crisis should be analyzed carefully, explanations should be provided in a timely manner, and interventions should be made early. Successful crisis management is important for implementing strategy and protecting or rebuilding the image. During the crisis management process, being transparent, honest, and effective communication helps organization to preserve its image.

The crisis resulting from the reports about Kızılay selling tents and their spread on social media following the February 6 earthquake has been analyzed within the framework of image restoration theory. The following results have been obtained:

The strategies used most frequently by Kızılay are evading responsibility and reducing offensiveness, while acceptance was used the least.

In the strategy of evading responsibility, Kızılay frequently used the subcategories such as provocation, good intentions, accidents, and defeasibility. In the category of reducing offensiveness, the strategies of support and transcendence were used more frequently.

It was also found that simple denial, a subcategory of the denial strategy, was used. This indicates that Kızılay initially did not acknowledge the crisis. Subsequent posts using strategies such as reducing offensiveness and corrective actions indicates that the crisis was acknowledged and that they made effort to solve the crisis.

After the February 6 earthquake, which is considered the disaster of the century, claims about the Kızılay sold tents quickly spread on Twitter. The first content regarding the crisis was shared on March 8,2023, with the post "Is Kızılay a state institution?" and for several days there was a discussion about the accusations whether the Kızılay was a state institution and whether it had sold tents. Following this post, similar content was created and spread on Twitter. In the upcoming days, posts such as "Is Kızılay selling your blood?" and "Do your donations reach the intended destination?" were made. When the contents were analyzed, it has been determined that from the image restoration theory strategies reducing offensiveness was used. After this date, Kızılay chose to remain silent and

did not post anything in response to the crisis. During the period when accusations against Kızılay continued, there was an increase in posts about the closure of the business in Afyonkarahisar where the mineral water was produced. In response, Kızılay stated that the mineral water factory was not closed but the production was temporarily halted. Kızılay's preferance to only make these statements and remain silent shows that it employed denial, evading responsbility, and reducing offensiveness strategies during the crisis. As a result of Kızılay's lack of statements and silence, blood donations decreased. Following this, Kızılay shared that there had been a reduction in blood donations and invited people to volunteer for blood donation due to insufficient blood stocks. Based on this, Kızılay's silence and lack of timely statements drew public attention and received a reaction. The increase in dialogues on social media, especially by someone at the level of Kızılay's chairman, has damaged the institution it represents and the crisis was not effectively managed. In July 2023, during the extraordinary general assembly meeting, the chairman of the Kızılay was changed.

For organizations, image has critical importance not only during the crisis but also during the normal periods. A positive image not only facilitates the organization to build a trustworthy reputation but also helps organization to establish strong and solid relationships with stakeholders. In periods of stability, continuous and effective communication contributes to increase trust and commitment among stakeholders. This, in turn, facilitates support for the organization from the public during times of crisis.

Especially during a crisis, a well-planned image strategy helps organization with an effective management of the crisis and helps maintaining the reputation. However, this is not just limited to providing quick response during a crisis. On the contrary, organizations can manage the process more effectively by establishing a strong communication network and connection with stakeholders. Effective communication, helps in gaining the trust and supports of stakeholders in the times of crisis, therefore creates a supportive basis for more effective crisis management. In conclusion, it is understood the crisis Kızılay experienced and all the content it shared, the organization used mostly denial, evading responsibility, and reducing the offensiveness strategies. However, rather than turning the crisis into an oppurtunity, these strategies contributed to the escalation of the crisis and caused damage to Kızılay's image.

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DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Ümmü Özlem ÇERÇİ[*]

Introduction

In today's world, where digitalization is accelerating and sustainability demands are increasing, digitalization and sustainability are two concepts that have gained great importance both in the business world and in society. It is clear that the rapid changes brought about by the digital age and global environmental issues are driving the business world towards a sustainability-oriented direction. Digitalization means the realization of business processes, communication strategies and customer interactions through digital platforms. Digital public relations refers to the application of traditional PR methods in the digital environment and the execution of public relations activities through the tools offered by digital technologies. Social media, blogs, digital press releases, and online platforms are among the main tools of digital PR; these tools enable companies and organizations to quickly and effectively convey their messages to large audiences. Digital PR not only increases brand awareness, but also plays a critical role in managing brand reputation, handling crisis communications and strengthening customer relationships. In this respect, digital PR has become an important strategic tool for competitive advantage in the modern business world.

Sustainability refers to a comprehensive approach with environmental, economic and social dimensions. Sustainable development aims to ensure social and economic development while meeting the needs of the present without jeopardizing the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs. For companies, sustainability means minimizing environmental impacts, fulfilling social responsibilities and improving long-term economic performance. In this context, it would be appropriate to say that effective communication of sustainability strategies and disclosure to stakeholders is one of the key elements of a successful sustainability program.

The successful integration of digital public relations and sustainability concepts offers modern organizations the opportunity to create a stronger

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synergy. Considering shifting communication preferences, or in other words, new communication trends, digital PR creates an ideal environment for promoting and supporting sustainability projects. Through digital PR strategies, businesses can publicize their sustainability initiatives, raise awareness of these projects and strengthen engagement with stakeholders. They can also use digital PR to ensure transparent and responsible communication about their sustainability efforts and increase consumer trust and brand reputation.

Sustainability Concept, Objectives and Benefits

Sustainability is defined as the ability to meet current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In "Sustainability", Thiele (2024, p.9) argues that this can only be achieved by managing the scale and pace of change in a way that preserves the basic functions, values and relationships of the communities of life that sustain us. Although the concept of sustainability is often associated with environmental issues, a truly sustainable approach should not be limited to just protecting the environment and conserving natural resources. It must meet economic needs, create economic opportunities, and enable empowerment by fostering fair relationships. If a business fails to generate profit and cannot pay its employees, how "green" it is becomes irrelevant. Sustainability can only be achieved through the balanced management of ecological, economic, and social dimensions. Sustainability, at an optimal level, encourages considering the well-being of everyone who could be affected by actions, relationships, or institutions, extending beyond immediate stakeholders to include those distant in time and space, and even other species (Thiele, 2024:8).

Sustainability is the proactive and responsible management of resources and societal interactions to ensure the continued well-being of current and future generations. It is based on harmonizing environmental stewardship, social equity and economic prosperity through integrated decision-making and long-term planning. Sustainability, defined by Patzelt and Shepherd (2011:632) as adopting goals or objectives that focus on the conservation of nature, life support and community, has become a critical aspect of contemporary business practices driven by global awareness and demands for sustainable development (Jacobsen et al., 2020:5166). Pullman et al. (2009) highlight three key aspects of sustainability: ensuring the continuity of benefits provided to individuals, maintaining sustainable program activities within organizations, and developing the capacities of

communities to offer such programs. This underscores that sustainability is not only about short-term impact but also about creating long-term, widespread effects. According to Moura et al. (2019:834), sustainability requires the transformation of lifestyles and practices. This transformation is important to ensure that environmental and social conditions can continuously support human security, well-being and health. In essence, sustainability is a holistic approach that seeks to ensure long-term fitness and well-being for both current and future generations by addressing the interconnectedness of environmental, social and economic systems. This includes responsible management of resources, fair social practices and economic prosperity that does not jeopardize the planet's ability to sustain life in the long term.

On the other hand, the fact that a company creates value through environmental, technological and social inputs causes business activities to have impacts on society and nature. Therefore, it can be said that companies are an integral part of a market, a society and nature in general. The combination of these components constitutes a system. From this system perspective, the impacts of a company's activities may differ from a narrower or short-term perspective. As part of this system, corporate sustainability is a term that harmonizes the overall sustainability approach at the corporate level. It refers to companies' balanced management of their environmental and social impacts while improving their economic performance. This approach aims to ensure a sustainable future for companies by assessing the long-term impact of their activities on society and nature. Today, numerous corporate sustainability initiatives exist. These include R&D efforts focused on sustainability to minimize environmental impacts in new products and business operations, activities designed to enhance sustainability knowledge within the organization, and actions that involve active management participation in addressing sustainability issues for employees (Baumgartner and Ebner, 2010, p. 79-81).These activities include methods, tools and strategies that help companies achieve higher sustainability performance by reducing their negative impacts and increasing their positive impacts (Zimek & Baumgartner, 2017).

Developing a sustainability strategy offers numerous benefits, including increased stakeholder satisfaction, higher purchase intention among consumers, greater legitimacy for the organization, enhanced admiration for the organization, improved company reputation, stronger relationships with the public, higher levels of trust and positive word-of-mouth communication (Ott & Bortree, 2016: 672). Another benefit that encourages cor-

porate interest in sustainability is that when problems arise, such as severe or lasting corporate impacts on the environment, communication with stakeholders helps to minimize damage before or after the event (Schaltegger & Burritt, 2005:185). Companies that choose to engage in sustainability practices for a variety of reasons and of various types are the subject of increasing research interest. Research on sustainability has grown rapidly in recent years and now covers a range of areas specific to industries, technologies, localities and legislation. When the studies on the subject are examined, the main objectives of sustainability can be summarized as follows (Kim & Oki, 2011:249; Jacobsen, Kosgaard, & Günzel, 2020: 1-22; Pfister, Schweighofer, & Reichel, 2016:1-10; Florea, Cheung, & Herndon, 2013:393-394; Özmen, Karakoç, & Yeşildağ, 2020:155; Tuna & Besler, 2015:174):

1. Environmental Protection: Preventing the depletion of natural resources, preserving ecosystems, and maintaining biodiversity.

2. Economic Development: Promoting long-term economic growth, using resources efficiently, and ensuring that economic activities are sustainable.

3. Social Justice: Reducing inequalities in society, enhancing social welfare, providing equal opportunities for all, and supporting community development.

4. Resource Management: Using energy, water, and other natural resources efficiently, reducing waste production, and promoting renewable energy sources.

5. Climate Change Mitigation: Reducing carbon emissions, mitigating the effects of climate change, and enhancing climate resilience.

6. Health and Well-being: Protecting human health and well-being, improving quality of life, and promoting sustainable lifestyles.

7. Cultural Heritage Preservation: Protecting cultural values and heritage, passing them on to future generations, and promoting cultural diversity.

8. Education and Awareness: Raising public awareness about sustainability issues, improving knowledge through educational programs, and fostering awareness of sustainability.

As stated in the "Sustainability Guide for Companies" prepared by Borsa İstanbul (2020), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), consisting of 17 articles, which are expected to be realized by 2030, were shaped and announced as a result of three years of intensive dialogue among stakeholders and the consensus of 193 country governments. These goals can be listed as follows:

1. Eradication of Poverty
2. Ending Hunger
3. Healthy and Quality Living Conditions
4. Quality Education Opportunities
5. Ensuring Gender Equality
6. Supply and Treatment of Clean Water
7. Accessible and Clean Energy Use
8. Decent Work Opportunities and Economic Growth
9. Development of Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
10. Reducing Inequalities
11. Building Sustainable Cities and Communities
12. Responsible Production and Consumption
13. Combating Climate Change
14. Protection of Water Resources
15. Protection of Terrestrial Ecosystems
16. Promoting Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
17. Realization of Objectives through Partnerships

In general, the goals of sustainability revolve around promoting responsible resource management, promoting environmental stewardship, advancing social equity and ensuring long-term sustainability for both current and future generations. By integrating sustainability into decision-making processes and various aspects of operations, organizations can contribute to a more sustainable and resilient future for society and the planet.

The benefits of sustainability are far-reaching and span across different sectors, contributing significantly to long-term prosperity and well-being. Sustainable practices offer many advantages such as enhanced cultural preservation, efficient use of local resources, promotion of sustainable lifestyles and support for sustainable development in different sectors such as boutique fashion brands (Nguyen et al., 2023: 1). The adoption of sustainable practices in production processes has the potential to increase the competitiveness of projects, reduce operating costs, increase employee satisfaction and provide competitive advantage by promoting environmental improvements (Zhuan, 2023:1; Swalehe et al., 2020:241). Sustainable practices highlight the importance of integrating sustainability into core business functions by promoting internationalization, business development, and operational excellence across various industries (Ly, 2021:1). Additionally, green human resource management practices and green intel-

lectual capital are regarded as valuable resources for achieving sustainable competitive advantage and enhanced performance within organizations (Malik et al., 2020:19-21). Sustainability positioning is of strategic importance in marketing and customer relations by positively influencing brand image, consumer loyalty and overall sustainability promotion (Gogia, 2023:389-390). Dynamic capabilities, sustainable strategic management, stakeholder-oriented approaches and sustainable supply chain management have been identified as key drivers for achieving corporate sustainability and sustainable competitive advantage (Bari et al., 2022:1-25). In almost all sectors, effective management of sustainability can provide a sustainable competitive advantage by capitalizing on rare, valuable and difficult to imitate resources (Gutiérrez et al., 2015:6).

As seen, the benefits of sustainability are quite diverse. Among these, increased operational efficiency, cost savings, enhanced brand reputation, improved market competitiveness, and long-term resilience can be said to come to the forefront. Organizations that adopt sustainable practices not only contribute to the well-being of current and future generations by enhancing environmental and social welfare but also gain a strategic advantage in today's dynamic and competitive business environment.

Sustainability, from a long-term perspective, emphasizes the necessity for businesses to balance social, environmental, and economic impacts rather than focusing solely on profit pressures. This approach aims to enhance social and environmental well-being by focusing not only on economic growth but also on development and progress. Additionally, it promotes collaboration and stakeholder-based solutions by integrating various parameters (environmental, social) alongside financial performance. Through efforts such as savings, circular economy, and solutions tailored to local needs, sustainability supports peaceful communication and integrated thinking, thus being incorporated into corporate strategies (Coşkun, 2022:21-81).

IKEA, which in 2012 announced that it would be 100% powered by renewable energy sources by 2020; LEGO, which in 2018 launched plant-based polyethylene toys that will soon replace standard plastic toys; Microsoft, which in recent years has made significant strides in sustainability, including diverting more than 60. 000 metric tons of waste from landfills in recent years and funding 20 different water replenishment projects in 2020; Abdi Ibrahim, a company that plans to be carbon neutral by 2030 and the first Turkish pharmaceutical company to use 100% renewable energy; Allianz, which has been working with the "Sustainable Value Crea-

tion Model" since 2016 to implement the values of "Good environment, good society, good organization", are notable examples of sustainability in Turkey and around the world (https://ecording.org/kurumsal-surdurulebilirlik-nedir/).

Sustainability Communication

Another key aspect of the sustainability approach is communication. A successful communication strategy is a critical tool to promote understanding, support and implementation of sustainable practices. Effective communication plays an important role in promoting sustainability efforts, engaging stakeholders and driving organizational change towards more sustainable outcomes. From corporate websites to e-commerce platforms, communication strategies are important for effectively communicating sustainability messages to engage stakeholders and the community in sustainable practices (SanMiguel et al., 2021:1-5). Corporate websites and other digital platforms are increasingly playing a crucial role in sustainability communication across various sectors (Siano et al., 2016:1). The choice of communication medium is an integral part of effectively conveying sustainability issues to stakeholders and is a critical aspect of sustainability reporting (Lodhia, 2018:2-12). Overall, there is a multifaceted relationship between sustainability and communication, encompassing the dissemination of sustainability messages, stakeholder engagement, and the promotion of sustainable practices across various industries. Organizations can leverage effective communication strategies to enhance their sustainability efforts, engage stakeholders, and promote positive changes towards a more sustainable future.

Various tools used in sustainability communication help organizations effectively communicate their sustainability strategies, increase stakeholder engagement and transparently present their environmental, social and economic impacts. Some of these tools are:

Sustainability Reports: A sustainability report, a document in which organizations report their sustainability performance annually, is an important communication tool that allows organizations to evaluate their economic, environmental and social performance and communicate this information to stakeholders. These reports provide valuable insights to internal and external stakeholders by presenting companies' sustainability efforts and progress in a transparent manner. It is also critical for enhancing corporate reputation, raising environmental and social awareness, and promoting ethical behavior. Sustainability reporting is an important tool

that promotes sustainable practices while securing the accountability of organizations (Hossain et al., 2019: 564; Lozano, 2011:67).

Digital Media: Digital media enables sustainability messages to reach large audiences, engage stakeholders and promote sustainable practices through various channels such as websites, blogs, social media platforms and digital newsletters (Jha and Verma, 2023:723-724).

Blockchain Technology: Blockchain technology is increasingly recognized for its role in improving sustainability communication across various sectors. While the technology contributes to sustainable development efforts by offering transparency, traceability, security and efficiency (Cao et al., 2023: 1439), organizations are leveraging blockchain technology to enhance their sustainability efforts by enabling real-time emission control, performance tracking and accurate decision-making (Chatterjee, 2024: 39-50).

Labeling and Certification: In sustainability communication, labels and certifications are frequently used to convey information about the environmental, social, and economic impacts of products and services. These labels and certifications play a crucial role in influencing consumer behavior, promoting sustainable practices, and enhancing transparency in supply chains. Labels and certifications that indicate products are sourced from sustainable resources or use environmentally friendly production methods, such as Fair Trade, Organic, and LEED certifications, are prominent examples in this context (Nygaard, 2023:2; Liu et al., 2019:1-2).

Meetings and Workshops: Events such as conferences, seminars, and workshops that promote information sharing and collaboration on sustainability topics serve as communication platforms that help enhance stakeholder engagement with sustainability strategies (Allen, 2016:189-229).

Education and Awareness Campaigns: These are activities organized to educate and raise awareness of the target audience on sustainability issues. Such education programs and campaigns aim to encourage target audiences to adopt sustainable lifestyles as well as contribute to the spread of sustainable practices in workplaces and daily life (Griffin et al., 2022:1831).

Social Responsibility Projects: Today, whether or not an organization fulfills its commitment to corporate social responsibility has a great share in the success of businesses and their image in the eyes of stakeholders. The ease with which organizations can communicate effectively with their target audiences makes them more reliable and preferred institutions in the eyes of employees, investors, distributors, suppliers, media, and non-governmental organizations (Canöz & Canöz, 2020:193). In this context,

for businesses that adopt a multidimensional understanding of success rather than focusing solely on economic achievements, social responsibility can be conceptualized as a strategic business practice necessary for integrating with society and achieving sustainable development and societal benefits (Pureza & Lee, 2020:1412; Öndoğan, 2021:5; Bakan & Kalender, 2007:347). Therefore, social responsibility communication is critically important in demonstrating how organizations take stakeholders' views into account in order to foster mutual understanding on sustainability issues. These projects, which organizations undertake to address social and environmental problems, are a crucial part of sustainability communication (Nwagbara & Reid, 2013:401-411).

Audiovisual Media: From documentaries to short films, podcasts and radio programs, audiovisual media can be used to effectively communicate sustainability issues to a wide range of audiences. Through these communication tools, the power of the media can be effectively utilized to raise awareness of sustainability, support sustainability efforts and create change in society.

These tools cover various aspects of sustainability communication, enabling organizations to achieve their sustainability goals and communicate effectively with their stakeholders.

Digital Public Relations in Sustainability Communication

Sustainability communication is simply the process by which organizations share their sustainability strategies through communication (Demren, 2023:30). Sustainability communication is a communication approach used to manage relationships between stakeholders to create awareness and intention on environmental, social and economic sustainability issues (Akdağ, 2022:123). The discipline of public relations, on the other hand, offers many strategies that can be used in sustainability communication with its structure aiming for accurate and trust-oriented communication (Akbayır, 2019:6). In sustainability communication, public relations plays important roles such as transparency, trust-building, awareness-raising and stakeholder engagement, while supporting companies to effectively share their sustainability efforts with stakeholders, protect their reputation in crisis situations and emphasize their social responsibilities by promoting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects. Public relations plays a strategic role in achieving sustainability goals and contributes to raising sustainability awareness in society (Özgen, 2022: 3). At this point, the presence of leadership that has adopted the understanding of sustainability

gives momentum to these efforts of public relations (Ünlü et al., 2022: 172).

The gradual replacement of traditional media by digital channels is transforming sustainability communication and public relations practices. Online communication has become a key relational factor that enables companies to meet their stakeholders, contributing to the development of trusted relationships with them and enhancing corporate reputation (Siano et al., 2016: 3). There is no doubt that the Sustainability Report will always exist in digital PDF or printed format. However, this does not mean that the PDF format is the most effective way to share content with all stakeholders. The impact of visual and video content on society demonstrates the potential for higher levels of communication and engagement through digital media (SanMiguel et al., 2021:6).

Kalender (2013:4) states that public relations can be defined as a management function or communication management, but recently this field has also been defined as relationship management. This function of public relations performed by organizations has undergone a radical change thanks to the digital tools provided by the internet. Thanks to the internet, public relations professionals are no longer dependent on traditional media to communicate with interest groups, but can conduct public relations activities independently of time and space through digital platforms. New tools enable organizations to enhance their interactions with customers, allowing them to conduct public relations activities more effectively and efficiently, and thereby develop long-term relationships (Allagui & Breslow, 2016:23). These technologies can offer more innovative public relations practices by enabling customers to interact more with the activities of organizations (Gülerman & Apaydın, 2017:259). Organizations interact with target audiences, share information and manage relationships by using digital content creation tools such as social media, websites, e-mail, blogs and visual/video sharing platforms. In this context, such digital communication strategies are called digital public relations (Alikılıç, 2011:16-17; Çeber, 2023:72). In short, digital public relations refers to public relations activities carried out on virtual platforms integrated with modern communication technologies. This approach offers interactive and dialog-based communication in a faster, innovative and strategic way (Çeber, 2023:71). Digital public relations tools that enable organizations to interact with their target audiences through various internet-based technologies and platforms can be briefly listed as follows:

Social Media Platforms: Interactions on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn.

Corporate Websites: Official websites used by organizations for information sharing and interaction.

E-mail Communication: Communication realized through newsletters and informational e-mails for subscribers.

Blogs: Platforms where the organization regularly publishes and shares content.

Online Press Releases: Press releases and news published digitally.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization): Efforts to improve the ranking of websites in search engines.

Video and Image Sharing Sites: Content published on platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo.

Digital Content Creation Tools: Digital content formats such as infographics, podcasts, e-books.

These tools are new generation communication tools that are extremely valuable in terms of today's communication needs, helping organizations to carry out their communication strategies and interact with their target audiences in the digital age.

In summary, "Digital PR" is a form of public relations that enables an organization to communicate strategically and effectively with its target audience through digital tools and platforms. Digital PR is carried out using social media, blogs, forums, corporate websites, email marketing and other digital communication channels. Through these tools and methods, organizations can deliver their messages to a wider audience, increase brand awareness and build strong relationships with stakeholders. Moreover, according to Grunig's field observations, digital media provides significant benefits such as easily tracking issues, conducting SEO and content analysis, and measuring the quality of trusting relationships. This extensive use of digital media increases the effectiveness of PR departments and is recognized as the newest hybrid element of the promotional mix (Permatasari et al., 2021:375). In this respect, digital PR has the potential to support sustainability efforts in areas such as transparency and trust building, awareness raising, stakeholder engagement, reputation and brand value enhancement, and crisis management.

Case Study: OMO / Dirt is Good for Goodness

Understanding successful practices in digital public relations and sustainability is crucial to see how theory and strategies are put into practice. In this section, the Unilever company and its OMO brand, which achieved its

sustainability goals by using digital public relations strategies and received the gold award in the "Corporate Sustainability Management" category in the PR section of the Brandverse Awards, will be analyzed as a case study. These analyses will provide valuable insights for other organizations by revealing how companies manage sustainability communication through digital tools and platforms and what strategies they adopt. In particular, it will be detailed how they announce their environmental and social responsibilities to a wider audience and reflect their understanding of sustainability through the effective use of digital public relations.

The Brandverse Awards is an event that recognizes innovative and successful work in the world of digital marketing, advertising, public relations and media. The Brandverse Awards are organized to highlight best practices and achievements in the industry and awards are presented in various categories. Categories include social media, content marketing, influencer collaborations, digital advertising and sustainability campaigns/ communications. These awards help brands strengthen their digital presence, enhance their reputation in the industry and promote their innovative approach to a wider audience (https://www.marketingturkiye. com.tr).

1. OMO Turkey / Dirt is Good for Goodness Park Project Website (İyilik İçin Kirlenmek Güzeldir Park Projesi)

"Dirt is good for goodness" is a project that OMO set out with the motto 'Let Plastics Turn into Playgrounds for Children, Not Waste'. When OMO's website is visited, it can seen that there are separate links for "Sustainability" (Sürdürülebilirlik) and "Dirt is Good for Goodness" (İyilik İçin Kirlenmek Güzeldir). Although it is a commercial brand, it can be said that the dominant presence of the sustainability link next to the "products" (ürünler) link and other links to support this understanding on the website, which can be considered as the visible face of the institutions, highlights the strong stance of the organization in the understanding of sustainability (https://www.omo.com/tr/surdurulebilirlik.html).

Image 1: Website of OMO

When the sustainability link is clicked, it can be seen that there are both informative and guiding contents on sensitive topics emphasized for a sustainable life, such as "Listen to the Earth!", "We Continue to Reduce Our Plastic Footprint", "What Does Sustainable Living Mean?", "10 Ways to Protect the Environment", "Paper Conservation", "The Glaciers Are Melting", and "Let's Protect Endangered Animals."

Image 2: Website of OMO / Sustainability Link
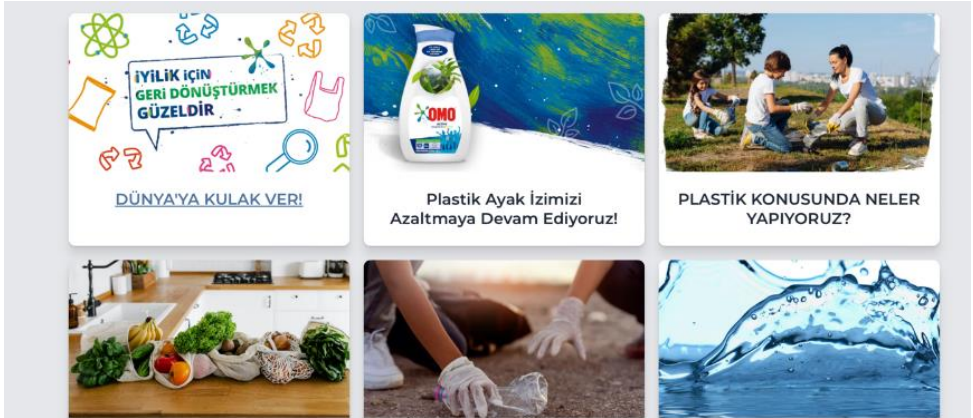
By including sustainability-oriented activities for children among these links on OMO's website, it is possible to say that OMO conveys the message that it is important to give the understanding of sustainability to the next generation that we want to leave a clean and livable world.

Image 3: Activity Links Page

PLASTİK AYAK İZİNİ AZALTMAK İÇİN YAPABİLECEKLERİNİ ÖĞRENMEK İSTER MİSİN?

Plastik ayak izini azaltmak için yapabileceğin bir sürü şey var. Üstelik çok da eğlenceli! Ailece plastik ayak izinizi azaltmanızı sağlayacak birbirinden eğlenceli ve öğretici içerikler hazırladık! Aşağıda yer alan içerikleri keşfetmeye hemen başla...

Aktivite sayfasını indirin.

Aktivite sayfasını indirin.

Aktivite sayfasını indirin.

Aktivite sayfasını indirin.

The "Dirt is Good for Goodness" page provides explanations and basic information about the project.

Image 4: Dirt is Good for Goodness Web Page

On this page, under the heading "The Happiness Journey of Plastics" OMO announces that it has launched a comprehensive goodwill initiative aimed at combating environmental pollution and raising sustainability awareness, targeting both children and adults. This initiative has restructured the slogan "Dirt is Good" (Kirlenmek güzeldir) to "Dirt is Good for Goodness" (İyilik için kirlenmek güzeldir) in line with the goal of recycling plastic waste. The page mentions that plastic waste was collected through recycling bins placed in front of schools in neighborhoods, and with the recycling of this waste, two parks were built in Uzunyazı Village of Ağrı and Uğurlu Village of Trabzon. Additionally, it is stated that the project plans to construct more parks and aims to raise social awareness and foster environmentally conscious individuals through this initiative.

When the web page was examined, it was found that sustainability communication efforts were made with the target audience in a wide range from what sustainability is to the work that can be done in this regard, from the amount of waste collected to the playgrounds transformed. There are also social media icons on the page.

2. OMO Turkey / Dirt is Good for Goodness Park Project on Instagram

OMO Turkey's Instagram page includes both videos and photos of its social responsibility projects in general and photos and video images of its award-winning project.

Image 5: OMO / It's Good to Get Dirty for Goodness Park Project Instagram Page
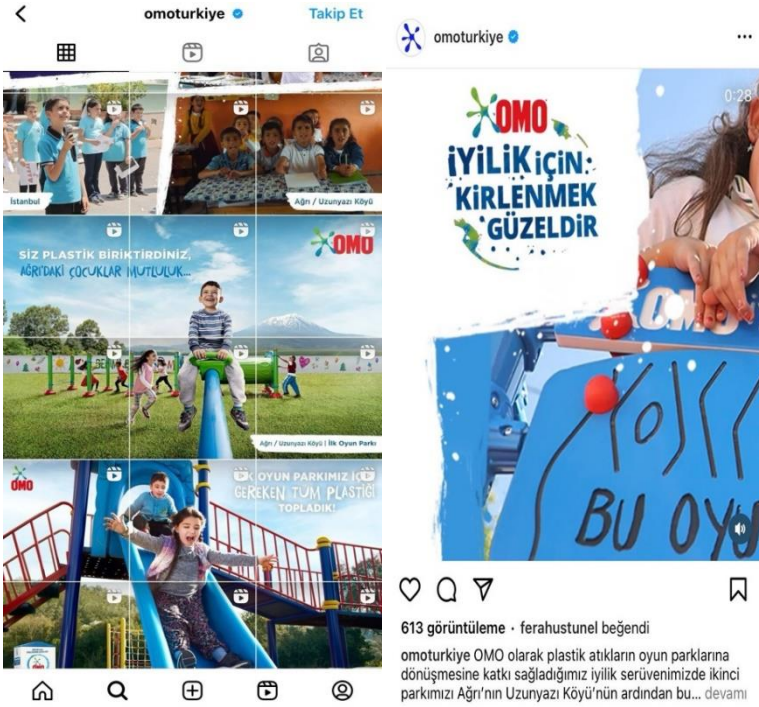
Considering that the page has 16.6B followers, it can be said that it has taken the right step in digital public relations by choosing the right communication channel for public relations activities such as announcing this project serving sustainability and social responsibility projects in general to the target audience and conducting them in interaction.

3. OMO Turkey / Dirt is Good for Goodness Park Project on Facebook

When OMO's Facebook page is analyzed, it is seen that although the number of followers is over 733 thousand, older posts are included and current content is not uploaded as much as the Instagram page.

Image 6: OMO / Dirt is Good for Goodness Park Project on Facebook
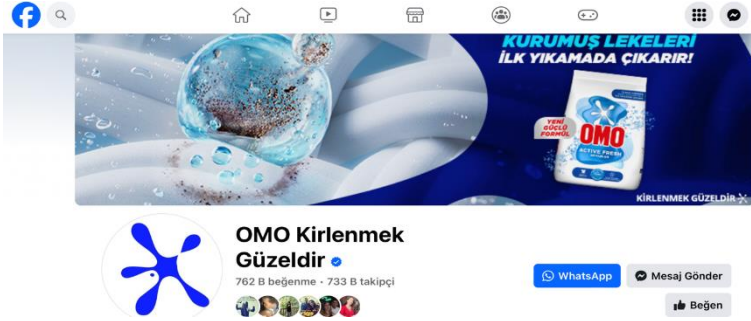
4. OMO Turkey / Dirt is Good for Goodness Park Project on YouTube

It has been observed that OMO is very active on YouTube and keeps the issue separate from other posts by creating a separate playlist of the project that it highlights in the name of sustainability on its channel, where it includes recent and up-to-date posts. Especially content that aims to create sustainability sensitivity in children and young people draws attention.

Image 7: Dirt is Good for Goodness Park Project YouTube Page
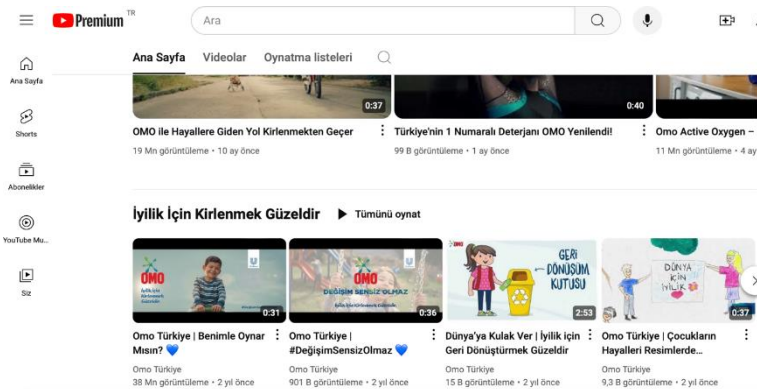
Image 8: Playlist for the project
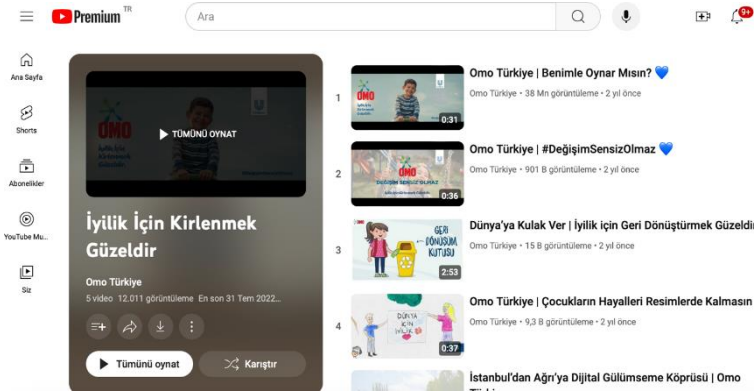
Conclusion

Digital public relations strategies are critical to achieving sustainability goals. Digital PR tools facilitate effective communication of sustainability efforts, raise social awareness and build strong relationships with stakeholders. These strategies utilize a variety of digital platforms, including social media, blogs, websites, email newsletters and digital content creation to reach large audiences. Social media platforms allow organizations to spread sustainability messages quickly and efficiently. Posting on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube enables sustainability projects and initiatives to be widely seen and adopted, while enabling more interactive and transparent communication with the target audience through direct feedback. Websites serve as one of the most appropriate channels for providing detailed information about sustainability efforts. These digital tools raise public awareness and strengthen corporate credibility by comprehensively sharing sustainability policies, goals and achievements. Regularly updated blog posts and articles also support education and awareness-raising on sustainability issues to create a lasting impact.

Digital content creation enables sustainability messages to be communicated in a more engaging and understandable way. Audio-visual content such as graphics, infographics, videos and animations simplify complex sustainability issues and create a powerful presentation medium. Sharing this content on digital platforms contributes greatly to awareness-raising efforts by reaching large audiences.

All these tools offer organizations the opportunity to communicate their sustainability initiatives to a wider audience, raise public awareness and build stronger, trust-based relationships with target audiences. As a

result, digital public relations strategies have become an important component of sustainability communication.

In this study, the impact of digital public relations strategies on achieving sustainability goals is analyzed through the OMO brand's "Dirt is Good for Goodness Park Project". The fact that OMO won the gold award for "Corporate Sustainability Management" in the PR section of the Brandverse Awards shows that digital PR strategies can make a great contribution to sustainability projects when used effectively. Within the scope of the project, recycling plastic waste and creating socially beneficial areas played an important role in achieving both environmental and social sustainability goals. This campaign, carried out through digital platforms, reached large audiences, raised awareness and increased social participation. In conclusion, digital PR strategies should be considered as a powerful tool for sustainability communication and used effectively in such projects. OMO's success sets an inspiring example for other brands.

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ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABILITY CONCEPT POSTS ON X (TWITTER) WITHIN THE SCOPE OF DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICES OF THE TOP 10 MOST PRESTIGIOUS BRANDS IN TURKEY

Özge Delen ULAŞ* - Ayça Çekiç AKYOL** - Sadık ÇALIŞKAN***

Introduction

In the digital era, brands utilize social media platforms to conduct communication activities, corporate events, and image-building endeavors. The internet and digitization have not only added dimensions to numerous aspects of our lives but have also imbued the public relations discipline with a digital orientation. It is acknowledged that organizations have embraced a new dimension in their operations through digital public relations activities.

Brands share posts on social media platforms within the scope of digital public relations activities by using digital media while carrying out image studies before stakeholders. These types of posts, while constituting part of digital public relations activities, offer organizations opportunities such as image and reputation management and gaining goodwill in the digital environment.

The brands that adopt a sustainable lifestyle by carrying natural resources, social system and economic activities into the future strengthen their image and gain the sympathy of consumers by building their corporate identity. Within the scope of the subject of the study, the sensitivities of brands to sustainability activities, their investments for the future and the work they carry out for renewable life on the X platform, which is one of the social media channels, the posts they share, the links, the emojis and hashtags used are reflections of digital public relations practices. This includes examining the posts they share, the links they provide, the emojis and hashtags they use, and the reflections of digital public relations prac-

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tices. On the other hand, social dimensional posts of sustainability that brands realise by aiming to gain the goodwill and sympathy of target audiences are also serve as indicators of digital public relations practices.

Brands are now gaining public acceptance not just through financially focused activities, but through their digital public relations efforts that consider society and future generations. According to Kuşat (2012), brands have adopted a new understanding by leaving their financial content work and expectations to social content work and expectations over time. In fact, institutions have undertaken various initiatives for sustainable living in their digital public relations activities by considering the expectations of their audiences. While carrying out these types of activities, they inform their target audiences through social media platforms, implementing the two-way communication model known as the symmetrical communication model. Türk and Güçdemir (2021) assert that brands adopting the symmetrical communication model through social media platforms will achieve transparency, interactive communication, and trust-based growth through the implementation of corporate communication-based plans.

Contemporary societies expect businesses to be open to development and to operate with an innovative vision, as compared to the past. In the globalized world order, brands aim to distinguish themselves from competitors due to the competitive market environment and to focus on activities that align with the expected social responsibility. While these objectives can be classified into various categories, the study highlights the category of digital public relations activities on the X platform related to the sustainable living concept. In addition to environmental, social, and economic categories, corporate sustainability activities represent another dimension of progress. The concept of corporate sustainability encompasses opportunities within itself, managing threats arising from economic, environmental, and social developments, and serves as a business system that generates shareholder value over the long term (Sancar, 2013). The concept of corporate sustainability represents a new dimension that businesses gain within the framework of sustainability.

Brands exhibit sensitivity to all economic, environmental, and social developments occurring in their surroundings, and act in a conscientious manner within this context. According to Erkesim, (2021) manufacturing enterprises must develop sustainable production strategies and switch to

lean production.[8] Sustainable living and production practices offer brands various opportunities, enhancing their reputation, image, profitability, and market presence and dominance. As a result, these practices are increasingly favored by brands.

Brands use social media platforms to demonstrate their commitment to a sustainable lifestyle through the products and services they offer, and to encourage consumers to take responsibility in this regard. In recent years, brands have increasingly developed sustainability messages, particularly on their social media accounts. These sustainability messages on social media platforms reflect the outcomes of digital public relations activities.

Sustainability and Corporate Sustainability

The term sustainable was first encountered in the Brundtland Report prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development in the 1990s. In this report, the concept of sustainability is defined as "development that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (MFA, 2010)."

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Global Goals, were adopted in 2015 by the United Nations as a universal call to address the major issues facing humanity. It is regarded as a universal call to action aimed at achieving peace and prosperity for humanity by 2030, ensuring improved quality of life and livable conditions (United Nations, 2015). These goals encompass a range of objectives, including the eradication of poverty, the provision of healthy and quality living, support for quality education, the protection of the planet, access to clean water and sanitation, and the promotion of accessible and clean energy, all aimed at achieving sustainable living.

Organizations are an essential component of social, economic, and environmental life. Given their crucial role, organizations are expected to report not only the impacts and tangible outcomes of their activities beyond economic results but also to demonstrate sensitivity to these issues, thus fulfilling their responsibilities as corporate citizens. Reports detailing the economic, social, and environmental outcomes of business activities illustrate that organizations, through their commitment to sustainable living, are attentive to stakeholder expectations and responsive to these concerns (Çalışkan, 2012).

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[8] A production style that adopts bi-directional communication with customers with an error-free cheap production approach from the perspective of minimum resource use by keeping distance with wastes.

Wilson (2003) asserts that although corporate growth and profitability are crucial, organizations must also engage in corporate sustainability activities that align with societal goals, particularly those related to sustainable development, (environmental protection, social justice and equity, and economic development). Until the 19th century, brands primarily aimed to generate profit. However, from the second half of the 1900s onwards, their perspectives and goals have evolved. These changes have led brands to focus on long-term brand value creation, often emphasizing sensitive issues related to employee rights, societal and environmental concerns, and other social attributes (Alpay & Varıcı, 2022).

There are various factors that make companies sustainable and drive them to undertake efforts and exhibit sensitivity in this regard. Some brands pursue sustainability initiatives due to concerns about losing financial power, whereas others view these activities as essential for establishing a strong corporate identity. On the other hand, brands recognize their responsibility for environmental damage and understand that, with the increasing awareness of consumers, they must meet expectations in this regard. Sustainability activities that shape a brand's mission and vision within the industry will differentiate it from competitors in the market and create a positive impression among consumers.

According to the Ivey Initiative, thousands of businesses are committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 (or earlier) in alignment with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement. These commitments are driven by investor pressure, the risk of asset obsolescence, evolving national policy frameworks, and accelerating societal expectations (Ivey Business School, 2023).

The Triple Bottom Line Report (TBLR), which consolidates a company's economic, environmental, and social activities under a single framework, is a significant report valued by modern corporations, businesses, brands, and governments. Triple Bottom Line Reporting is a complementary approach that explains and presents a brand's environmental, economic, and social values, plans, and processes. The term "Triple Bottom Line" (TBL), introduced by John Elkington in 1994, refers to a framework that prioritizes efforts in social and environmental areas for the benefit of society, rather than merely focusing on financial gains. Arslan and Kısacık (2017) describe TBL as a system that evaluates brands not based on traditional financial performance metrics such as profit and return on investment, but rather on their behaviours related to environmental and social issues. TBL emphasizes the necessity for brands to evaluate and minimize

the potential harm they may cause, demonstrate sensitivity to such issues, and preserve their values by addressing and prioritizing economic, environmental, and social concerns (Strategic Communications Consultancy, 2003).

The Brundtland Report, also known as Our Common Future and named after Gro Harlem Brundtland, the former Prime Minister of Norway and then-chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), was published by the United Nations in 1987. The objectives of the Brundtland Commission can be listed as follows (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org):

- To strengthen international cooperation and division of labour on environment and development and propose new collaborations, breaking with existing stereotypes and influencing policies and situations towards necessary change.
- To reassess critical environmental and development issues and to formulate objective, realistic, and significant actions to address them.
- To ensure individuals, companies, non-governmental organizations, and governments demonstrate alignment with activities and increase their level of commitment (Brundtland, 1987).

According to this foundational report on sustainability, brands, governments, and organizations should collaborate internationally to develop solutions that address environmental policies. Additionally, decisions and actions in this process should be rational, inclusive, and broadly applicable. Another key point is that stakeholders involved in the process should work voluntarily and in alignment with one another. This study will examine how digital public relations practices are manifested by brands, focusing on the evaluation of their digital practices on social media platforms while considering all these sensitivities.

Dimensions of Sustainability

Since its initial introduction by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), the concept of sustainability has been explored in three distinct dimensions in the literature. These are as follows:

- Environmental
- Economic
- Social

Sustainable living, renewable resources, and the preservation of ecosystem functions are themes that fall within the environmental dimension of sustainability. From an economic perspective, a sustainable system is described as one that produces goods and services without causing harm to agricultural and industrial production. Finally, the social dimension of sustainability encompasses themes such as health, education, social equality, and political rights. The concept of sustainability encompasses not only environmental practices aimed at preserving natural life and maintaining social balance but also includes economic and social development aspects (Gedik, 2020).

According to the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) (Global Reporting İnitiative , 2015) report, sustainability comprises three distinct dimensions, each with various subcategories. When the economic dimension of sustainability is evaluated, there are criteria such as economic performance, market presence, indirect economic impacts, procurement practices, etc. The environmental dimension includes materials, energy, water, biodiversity, emissions, wastewater and waste, products and services, compliance, transport, general, environmental assessment of the supplier, environmental complaint mechanisms, etc. The social dimension of sustainability includes subcategories such as labor practices and decent work, human rights, social impact, and product responsibility.

Corporate Sustainability & Brands

As the responsibilities of brand managers have evolved, brands have moved away from traditional structures that focus solely on their own interests or those of shareholders. Instead, they have adopted new processes that consider the benefits of stakeholders, employees, governments, and investors.

In this context, brands underwent changes in their social responsibility roles during the 1970s, and by the 1980s, a comprehensive consensus had emerged regarding the need for brand managers to be responsive to societal demands and to fulfill the necessary duties in meeting these demands (Tokgöz & Önce, 2009). Wilson (2003) discusses several concepts aligned with the sustainability paradigm. While engaging in sustainability activities. Brands draw support from concepts such as sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory, and accountability.

Sustainable development is a management approach pursued during a company's growth. It involves the advancement and progress of companies or brands within the sustainability framework. Companies undertake vari-

ous sustainability initiatives depending on their sector. Examples of activities that companies committed to sustainable development might engage in include energy management, climate change adaptation, water management, and sustainable packaging (Tokgöz & Önce, 2009).

The concept of corporate sustainability, which emphasizes the necessity of investing in the future, extends beyond merely seeking new business models and ways to enhance gains for brands (Tokgöz & Önce, 2009). According to Engin and Akgöz (2013), studies that view corporate sustainability as an umbrella concept are increasing day by day, and it is known that corporate social responsibility is an integral part of this concept. Brands are subject to scrutiny and monitoring by the public regarding their corporate social responsibility activities, sustainable development values, and brand principles. This process is most closely related to the brand's employees, financial institutions and shareholders. In addition, they demand brands to be transparent and have an accountable management approach.

Brands have gradually come to understand the necessity of corporate sustainability and have realized that the foundations of these sustainability practices can only be established through effective communication and interaction with their stakeholders, governments, public institutions, and non-governmental organizations (Çınarlı, 2014). Stakeholder theory and sustainability highlights the role of brands or businesses in their interactions with their environment. Stakeholder theory enables brands to operate by considering all their stakeholders, both internal and external.

Under the umbrella of corporate sustainability, another supporting concept for brands is accountability theory. A competent brand management is accountable to its shareholders and all other stakeholders. Brands have experienced that embracing the responsibility for sustainable living in their operations contributes to their economic progress and sustainable growth. Similarly, sustainable products/services, transparent management practices, accountability, and collaborative management systems with stakeholders provide brands with respect, strength, and competitive advantage (Senal & Ateş, 2012).

In the context of corporate sustainability, while brands acknowledge that corporate growth and profitability are essential, they must also closely monitor their social goals, particularly those related to sustainable development (environmental protection, social justice and equal treatment, and economic development). In this context, the contribution of corporate sustainability activities to sustainable development occurs in two ways. First-

ly, it helps to define the areas that companies need to focus on, which are environmental, social and economic performance. Secondly, the existence of ecological, social and economic sustainability efforts, providing a common social goal for companies, governments and civil society to work towards (Wilson, 2003).

Brands encompass two fundamental functions within the scope of sustainability. The first function facilitates the creation of a new advancement model, while the second enables brands to make both material and intangible investments for the future, beyond their current gains (Tandırcıoğlu, 2022). From this perspective, it is anticipated that brands will embrace sustainability activities due to the significant benefits they offer and will engage in various initiatives in this area.

In this study, the focus will be on examining the sustainability-themed posts shared by the top 10 most valuable and prestigious brands in Turkey on the X platform, as one of their digital public relations activities, to assess their awareness of the advantages provided by sustainability. According to the Brand Finance 2023 report, the top 10 most valuable and prestigious brands in Turkey have been identified. Each year, Brand Finance assesses the strength and value of more than 5000 global brands and conducts studies to verify the relationship between marketing measurement and financial performance of brands. According to 2023 data, the most prestigious and most valuable brands are as follows; Turkish Airlines, Arçelik, Vestel, Garanti BBVA, İşbank, BİM, Ziraat Bank, Ford Otosan, Turkcell, and Akbank (Brand Finance, 2023).

4. Methodology

The purpose of the study: Sustainability has become one of the most significant topics in human life over the past 20-30 years. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for Turkey aim to end poverty, protect the environment, take action against the climate crisis, share prosperity fairly and promote peace. (Birleşmiş Milletler Türkiye, 2023). Activities are undertaken with a focus on sustainability to reduce the consumption of environmental, economic, and social resources within the context of the responsibilities assigned to governments, international institutions, civil society organizations, and society itself (Özmen, Karakoç, & Yeşildağ, 2020). In the context of technological advancements and evolving societal structures, the use of digital media by brands for communication, interaction, and engagement with their target audiences can be cited as an example of digital public relations practices. The aim of the study is to examine

the digital public relations activities of the top 10 most valuable brands in Turkey, regarding their environmental, economic, and social actions, through the analysis of their social media content on X (Twitter) in the context of sustainability. The objective is to analyze whether the examined content includes sustainability communication efforts by brands, the level of importance placed on sustainability, the frequency of shared content on the topic, and the preferred sustainable dimension.

The significance of the study: It lies in the activities conducted within the framework of the sustainability concept, such as preserving the environment through several examples, the expectation of an increase in welfare alongside an increase in the consumption of goods and services, and the formation of high-quality partnerships that extend into the future based on individuals' needs. These attitudes can be regarded as brands being sensitive to the world, respecting human life and behaving sensitively. Within this perspective, brands that demonstrate sensitivity are expected to enhance positive perceptions among the public through their digital public relations practices. In this context, brands address the public and the environment by conducting sustainability activities in online environments, using digital media platforms. A significant portion of these activities can be encountered on social media platforms. This study evaluates variables such as the presence of sustainability-themed posts on platform X, the dimensions of sustainability they encompass, the objectives targeted by these dimensions' subcategories, and the emojis used in the posts. The research is significant for understanding how brands leverage technology, digitalization, and social media to facilitate effective, swift, and straightforward digital public relations practices.

Method of the Study

The method of the study is the survey model from quantitative research methods. The data were analysed by quantitative content analysis technique. The most well-known definition of content analysis was formulated by Berelson in 1952. According to this definition, content analysis is *"a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest (visible/obvious) content of communication* (Gökçe, 2019)." The technique of content analysis can be described as the quantification and numerical representation of what individuals write and say (Alanka, 2024).

The questions to be answered within the scope of the research are as follows:

For the 10 most valuable and prestigious brands of Turkey according to the Brand Finance 2023 report;

R.Q.1. Which dimension of sustainability is emphasised in the posts on the platform X?

R.Q.2. What is the type of posts on the platform X?

R.Q.3. Are hashtags, links, tags and emojis used in their posts on platform X?

The coding categories of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) were used in the study (Global Reporting Initiative, 2015). In the study, the posts of Turkey's top 10 most prestigious and valuable brands on the X platform were analyzed over a six-month period between July 1st 2023 and December 31st 2023.

The sample of the study uses purposive sampling, wherein researchers select clusters based on the most suitable characteristics for the study's purpose (Başkale, 2016). In this way, it represents non-random, non-probability sampling, indicating clusters selected with a specific purpose in mind. The sample of the study is based on purposive sampling, a form of non-probabilistic, non-random sampling, and it focuses on the top 10 most valuable and prestigious brands in Turkey from the Brand Finance 2023 report (Turkish Airlines, Arçelik, Vestel, Garanti BBVA, İş Bankası, BİM, Ziraat Bankası, Ford Otosan, Turkcell, Akbank).

The study encompasses the posts shared by the 10 brands on the X platform between July 1, 2023, and December 31, 2023. Within the 6-month period, these 10 brands collectively made 845 posts on X, with 94 of these posts related to the concept of sustainability. Furthermore, the study examined the annual posts of the brands throughout 2023, revealing no sustainability-themed posts in the first half of the year. This is suspected to be due to the prevalence and focus on the 6th of February Earthquakes and the ongoing political election processes in the country during the first half of 2023. As a result, the evaluated content comprises 94 posts from the 6-month period.

Coding of Data: The data coding was based on the categories provided by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) (Global Reporting Initiative, 2015).

Table 1. Sustainability Dimensions and Elements in the GRI Guidelines

Category	Environmental Dimension		Economic Dimension	
ELEMENTS	Materials		Economic performance	
	Water		Market Presence	
	Energy		Indirect Economic Impacts	
	Biodiversity		Purchasing practices	
	Emissions			
	Wastewater and Wastes			
	Products and Services			
	Shipping			
	Compliance			
	Environmental grievance mechanisms			
	Evaluation of Suppliers from Environmental Care			
Category	Social Dimension			
Subcategories	Labor Practices and Decent Work	Human Rights	Society	Products Liability
	Employment	Investment	Local communities	Customer health and safety
	Labor/ Management relations	Prevention of Discrimination	Anti-corruption	Product and service labelling
	Occupational Health and Safety	Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining	Public policy	Marketing Communications
	Education and Training	Child labourers	Anticompetitive	Customer Privacy
	Diversity and equal opportunity	Forced or Compulsory Labor	Compliance	Compliance
	Equal pay for men and women	Security practices	Evaluation of suppliers in terms of impacts on society	
	Evaluation of suppliers in terms of labor practices	Rights of indigenous peoples	Complaint mechanism on impacts on society	
	Labor practices grievance mechanisms	Evaluation		
		Evaluation of suppliers in terms of human rights		
		Human rights grievance mechanism		

Source: Initiative, Global Reporting. 2015

Findings

This section presents the findings regarding the social media posts of 10 brands, which are among the most prestigious and valuable brands in Turkey, in the context of digital public relations and sustainability. First, the data pertaining to the brands and their social media posts can be observed in Table 2.

Table 2. Brands

	Frequency	Percentage
Turkish Airlines	23	24.5
Akbank	20	21,3
İş Bank	15	16,0
Arçelik	11	11.7
Ziraat Bank	10	10,6
Turkcell	5	5,3
Garanti BBVA	5	5,3
Ford	4	4,3
Vestel	1	1,0
BIM	0	0
Total	94	100.0

Table 2 displays the frequencies and percentages of sustainable-themed posts by the top 10 prestigious and valuable brands in Turkey on the X platform over a period of 6 months. Turkish Airlines, with 24.5%, is the brand that had the highest number of posts related to sustainability among the brands. Following the announcement of Turkish Airlines ranking first in the Sustainability Perception Values in the Brand Finance 2023 Report, the brand reflected this achievement in its posts. The brand reflected this situation in its post with the publication of its ranking (see Figure 1). Another brand, BİM, did not make any posts related to sustainability. Vestel is the brand with the lowest percentage of sustainability-themed posts, at 1.0%. The brands' total number of posts for 6 months is 845 X posts. Of these posts, 94 were on the theme of sustainability. In the study, only these posts were subjected to content analysis.

Figure 1. X post of Turkish Airlines

As previously mentioned in Figure 1, Turkish Airlines announced its success in the perception of sustainability.

Table 3. Environmental Dimension of Sustainability

	Frequency	Percentage
None	47	50,0
Energy	16	17.0
Biodiversity	8	8,5
Water	5	5,3
Emissions	4	4,3
Wastewater and Wastes	4	4,3
General	4	4,3
Materials:	3	3,2
Products and Services	2	2,1
Evaluation of Suppliers from Environmental Care	1	1,0
Total	94	100.0

The findings related to the extent of the use of the environmental dimension of sustainability in the posts of brands on Platform X are presented in Table 3. In the environmental dimension of sustainability, brands' posts mostly consist of energy-related posts with 17%. The term "energy" encompasses various elements such as total fuel consumption, electricity, heating, cooling, and others. It also refers to the situation where energy consumption does not become a cost burden for the business. Following the energy sub-heading, the next highest rate belongs to biological diversi-

ty with 8.5% Biological diversity encompasses geographical location, underground lands owned by the organization, terrestrial, freshwater, pollution, habitat transformation, marine ecosystems, and more. The least mentioned aspect in the environmental dimension was the evaluation of suppliers from an environmental perspective with a rate of 1.0%. In approximately half of the total 94 posts, the environmental dimension of sustainability was not addressed.

Table 4. Social Dimension of Sustainability

	Frequency	Percentage
None	68	72,3
Labor Practices and Decent Work	22	23,5
Society	2	2,1
Products Liability	2	2,1
Total	94	100.0

Table 4 presents findings on the extent of the utilization of the social dimension of sustainability in brand posts on the X platform. The subheading "Labor Practices and Decent Work" within the social dimension of sustainability is the most preferred category in brand posts, with a rate of 23.5%. This preferred subcategory within the social dimension encompasses individuals' rights to work and employment, occupational health and safety conditions, social security benefits, and labor unions. The least preferred topics in X posts are product liability at 2.1%, and society at the same percentage of 2.1%. The title of product liability includes the concepts of sustainable quality, innovation, precision and longevity. Thus, in their posts, brands focus predominantly on labor practices and human-centric employment within the social category in the context of sustainable sensitivity, while placing minimal emphasis on product-related liabilities.

Table 5. Economic Dimension of Sustainability

	Frequency	Percentage
None	73	77,7
Market Presence	14	14,9
Economic performance	5	5,3
Indirect Economic Impacts	1	1,0
Purchasing practices	1	1,0
Total	94	100.0

Table 5 includes data on sustainability pertaining to the economic dimension of sustainability shared by the most prestigious 10 brands in Tur-

key within the platform X. The brands shared sustainability posts related to their market presence the most, with a percentage of 14.9%. The content of the posts related to market presence includes how the brands contribute to society, the economic welfare of employees in important locations, social license, etc. Within the economic dimension, sustainability posts related to purchasing practices were shared with a minimum percentage of 1.0. Purchasing practices can be explained as the fact that the organisation indirectly attracts additional investments, supports the local economy, etc.

Table 6. Type of Post

	Frequency	Percentage
Text + video	63	67,0
Text+ photo	31	33,0
Total	94	100.0

Existing 10 brands' X posts between 1 July 2023 and 31 December 2023 were also examined in terms of post type. The types of these posts were categorized as "text, photo, video, text + photo, text + video, photo + video and text + photo+ video". Table 6 indicates that brands used the text + video post type the most, with a 67.0% share in X posts. Another type of post used is text+ photo post format with 33.0%. The content types of all 94 posts discussed in the study context were enriched using multiple arguments. Furthermore, it can also be asserted that users prefer both the text + video and text + photo types at the same time due to appealing to multiple sensory organs. There was no post type consisting of text, photo or video alone.

Table 7. Hashtag (#) Usage

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	61	64.9
None	33	35,1
Total	94	100.0

The findings related to the frequency of hashtag usage in brand X's posts are presented in Table 7. The use of hashtags was observed in 64.9% of the existing 94 posts. On the other hand, 35.1% of these posts did not use hashtags. The use of these hashtags helps the current posts reach a wider audience.

Table 8. Link Usage

	Frequency	Percentage
None	66	70.2
Yes	28	29.8
Total	94	100.0

Findings regarding the use of links in the posts shared by the top 10 prestigious brands in Turkey on the Platform X, related to sustainability, are presented in Table 8. In 70.2% of the posts, no link was used, while in 29.8% of the posts, a link was used.

Table 9. Emoji Usage

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	58	61.7
None	36	38,3
Total	94	100.0

Table 9 shows the findings regarding the frequency of emoji use in the posts of 10 brands on sustainability in the platform X. According to the table, the use of emojis was found in 61.7% of the existing posts, while the use of emojis was not found in 38.3%.

Table 10. Tag Usage (@)

	Frequency	Percentage
None	72	76.6
Yes	22	23.4
Total	94	100.0

Table 10 provides findings on the frequency of usage of the tagging method within the content of 94 posts from the top 10 prestigious brands. While 76.6% of the posts did not use tags, 23.4% of the posts used tags.

Conclusion

Humanity is known to carry natural resources, social systems and economic activities into the future and to pay attention to sustainable use by taking sensitive behaviour at this point. Brands are aware of the ethical responsibility involved in assuming various sustainable activities aimed at the sensitivities of societies. Such sustainable activities design every step taken in accordance with the future by keeping the ecology, society and economy alive. In a market environment where consumer standards are rising and expectations are increasing day by day, brands attach great importance to sustainable future practices. Kayıkçı et al. (2019) state that

brands that are aware of customer expectations and adopt a sustainability approach receive positive feedback from customers, and that the increase in sales rates and the positive change in the brand's image, identity and reputation become visible.

Recently, it is seen that brands emphasize sustainable consumption in their advertising messages and social media content focusing on sustainability communication (Özdemir, 2023). The study analyzed the posts of brands on X platform in terms of their digital public relations practices, evaluating the frequency of brands' sustainable-themed posts, the sustainability category to which these posts belong, emoji usage, hashtags, tags, links, and the type of post. Brands use various ways to appeal to and reach more audiences in their posts on social media channels. According to Demirer and Özer, (2019) the social media post popularity of brands may depend on factors such as content type, content context, post type and post day. For this reason, the types of the aforementioned posts were specifically evaluated.

A total of 94 posts with sustainability-themed content from the official X accounts of 10 brands (Turkish Airlines, Akbank, İş Bank, Arçelik, Ziraat Bank, Turkcell, Garanti BBVA, Ford, Vestel, BİM) were analyzed over a 6-month period. As a result, it was observed that Turkish Airlines is the brand that most prominently features sustainable messages in its posts, while Vestel was found to have the least number of sustainability-themed posts. Additionally, according to the current analysis, BİM was identified as the brand with no sustainability-related posts.

Sustainability categories were identified as environmental, social, and economic, and it was analyzed which category the posts of the 10 brands in question belonged to. It is evident that the current posts have been developed predominantly to serve the social dimension the most. In this dimension, mostly posts are aimed at labor practices and decent work subcategory. The social dimension of sustainability is important for the continuity of social values, relationships and brands for the future (Develi, 2023). Thus, it can be inferred that the sustainability posts shared by brands are included in more social categories, that brands prioritize social sensitivities, and that they attach importance to values such as equality of opportunity and improvement in quality of life. Thus, these results emerge within the scope of businesses' public relations activities and their evolving digital versions.

Another category, environmental dimension, is the second most commonly used dimension in the posts. The energy sub-category is the most frequently mentioned topic within the environmental dimension. Accord-

ing to Gedik (2020), addressing environmentally sensitive sustainability policies enhances the efficiency and visibility of the business, ultimately serving as a source of superior competitive opportunities.

The least encountered category in the posts of 10 brands is the economic category. Even though it was the least used category, it was found that the posts shared within the category were mostly developed within the sub-heading of market presence. Brands shared information on topics such as market presence and contributions to the local economy.

In the scope of the research, when the types of posts shared by the brands were examined, it was found that the most frequently used type of post is text + video. Simultaneous support of posts with elements such as text, video and photographs helps the message conveyed to users to be more effective. Another most preferred post type is text + photo.

The frequency of hashtag use in existing sustainability posts on the X platform was found to be quite high. With the use of hashtags in more than half of the posts, the use of hashtags helps existing posts reach more people. The central mechanism that enables organization and mobilization in X is the hashtag (Avşar & Varış, 2022).

In the scope of the research, it was observed that the majority of the sustainability posts shared by the brands contained URLs. In this respect, messages increase the interaction rate of the post by including various links within themselves. Links are used to enable users to obtain further information on the subject.

In the analysis of the content of the sustainable-themed posts, which are the study samples, it was seen that the frequency of emoji use was quite high. The number of posts that do not use emoji is quite low. It was determined that Turkish Airlines was the brand that used the most emoji in its posts. These emojis support the process of transferring the content of brand posts and leave positive impressions on the target audience. Emojis ensure that the content attracts more attention, pleasing and memorable for the target audience (Solak, 2020).

Within the scope of the research, it is seen that the use of labels is frequently preferred in the aforementioned posts. Brands can announce their sustainable work to target audiences faster by tagging digital public relations activities with other people, institutions or brands linked to each other in their posts. The concept of tagging enables any person or organisation to attract the attention of other people or organisations during a content sharing, allowing it to spread easily on social media channels and to talk about the content. As a result of this process, any topic can become a

trending topic and bring together hundreds of people under the tag that is being used (Bozkurt, 2020).

In the literature on sustainability and brands, there is a general focus on sustainability activities of brands in a specific sector. This study is differentiated from other studies by the fact that the study samples consist of brands from different sectors. On the other hand, in contrast to other studies on sustainability the study aims to determine the extent to which sustainability categories are embraced by the most prestigious brands in Turkey, as well as the most frequently used category. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the types of shared posts, emoji usage, hashtag usage, link usage, and tag usage.

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DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: AN ANALYSIS ON KOÇ UNIVERSITY, MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY AND ISTANBUL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

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Introduction

New opportunities created by today's technological advancements have given rise to change. Today's evolving landscape has led to the transformation of various professions, including public relations. Public relations and communication activities, which have historically taken various forms, have gained new fields of activity due to factors such as technological advancements and the digitalization of communication systems. The effort to keep up with the current conditions and demands of the modern age has led to the digitalization of public relations activities and their migration to online platforms. Today, public relations activities are conducted from a much broader perspective, utilizing both traditional tools and new media in a systematic and coordinated manner (Şirzad & Turancı, 2019).

The digital age has sparked profound transformations in public relations (PR). Traditional PR approaches have given way to dynamic, interactive methods, fueled by digital technologies and the internet. Digital PR empowers organizations to proactively manage their brand image and reputation by engaging directly and consistently with their audiences on digital platforms. Social media, blogs, video sharing platforms, online news outlets, and other digital tools serve as pivotal components in these communication strategies.

By embracing these new communication tools and strategies, higher education institutions seek to enhance their communication with students, parents, academics, and other stakeholders. Through digital PR strategies, these institutions can promote their academic achievements, research projects, campus life, and other critical developments to a broad audience. Digital PR also presents substantial opportunities in areas such as student

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recruitment, fundraising, alumni relations, and international collaborations. Digital public relations strategies are crucial for higher education institutions in fortifying their brand identity and gaining a competitive edge. These strategies empower institutions to directly reach their target audiences and promptly gather feedback. Moreover, they enable institutions to safeguard their reputation by swiftly and effectively managing crisis communication situations.

In this section, digital public relations activities will be analyzed using the examples of Koç University, Middle East Technical University (METU), and Istanbul Technical University (ITU), prominent higher education institutions in Türkiye. The discussion will focus on how these institutions employ digital PR strategies, their preferred tools, and the outcomes of these strategies.

Koç University has established a robust brand presence both locally and internationally through innovative digital PR strategies. Leveraging platforms like social media, blogs, and video content, the university effectively engages with its students and stakeholders. METU focuses on expanding its global student base and enhancing international collaborations via digital public relations strategies. Utilizing digital tools, the university promotes its research endeavors and academic accomplishments to a broad audience while maintaining ongoing communication with its alumni. ITU harnesses technology and innovation in its digital PR efforts, maintaining an active presence on social media platforms and raising community awareness through digital campaigns.

The digital PR strategies of these higher education institutions serve as a model for other universities and educational institutions and inspire them to develop PR strategies that meet the requirements of the digital age. By effectively utilizing these strategies, institutions can enhance their brand value and reputation, fostering stronger and enduring connections with their target audiences.

1. The Concept of Digital Public Relations

Digital public relations encompasses the processes of engaging with target audiences, enhancing brand awareness, and managing reputation through internet-based and digital media tools (Smith, 2021). It represents a shift from traditional public relations methods to contemporary communication technologies. This transformation has given rise to new terms and practices such as "digital public relations," "online public relations," "E-PR," and "PR 2.0" (Philips & Young, 2009; Solis & Breakenridge, 2009).

Activities conducted through digital platforms and technologies can be classified under the umbrella of digital public relations, which focuses on leveraging digital media for public relations purposes (Sönmez, 2020).

With advancements in communication technologies, the field of public relations has undergone significant transformation. Modern, interactive methods have supplanted traditional communication approaches. The internet and social media have emerged as pivotal tools in this evolution. Previously, organizations conveyed messages to their target audiences using traditional methods such as television, radio, photographs, brochures, and press releases (Okay & Okay, 2009). However, in today's technological landscape, these methods have been largely replaced by digital platforms.

Digital platforms have revolutionized the public relations profession, creating new channels and significantly enhancing its impact. By replacing traditional and costly methods, digital platforms have streamlined processes and made tasks more manageable. This shift has fostered a reliable, transparent, two-way, rapid, and comprehensive public relations environment. An interactive paradigm has emerged, encouraging active participation from stakeholders (Doyuran, 2023).

Digital public relations encompasses activities such as publishing online news releases, leveraging journalistic networks, and disseminating information through the internet. These efforts are aimed at informing target audiences about an organization's services or current issues relevant to the organization (Gifford, 2010).

Public relations has evolved significantly beyond its traditional scope by harnessing the power of the internet to engage broader audiences. Digital public relations represents an innovative approach, involving PR practices automated through new information and communication technologies (ICTs). These practices are characterized as highly creative, strategic, fast, results-oriented, and cost-effective. Digital public relations leverages online media, search engines, and social platforms as channels for communication, engagement, and interaction (Özel & Sert, 2014).

Digital public relations differs significantly from traditional public relations in several key ways. One of the most obvious differences is the fast and instant communication offered by digital platforms (Miller, 2019). Unlike traditional PR, which may require time to disseminate messages and gather feedback, digital PR accelerates this process considerably. Another critical difference lies in measurability and targeting. Digital PR campaigns are more easily measurable using digital tools, allowing for instant analysis of campaign success (Johnson, 2020). Moreover, digital platforms

enable precise audience targeting based on demographic and psychographic data, ensuring messages reach the right audience effectively (Williams, 2021).

The importance of digital public relations in today's landscape cannot be overstated. With the internet and digital technologies integral to daily life, establishing a presence on digital platforms and effectively communicating with target audiences is essential for brands (Evans, 2019). Digital PR plays a pivotal role in safeguarding brand reputation, managing crises effectively, fostering stronger customer relationships, and enhancing brand awareness (Taylor, 2020).

2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Digital Public Relations

The innovations brought about by the digital age have indeed sparked radical changes in the public relations (PR) sector.

The advantages of digital public relations can be outlined as follows;

Reaching Large Audiences: Digital platforms enable PR campaigns to reach vast audiences without geographical constraints. For instance, campaigns on social media platforms can effectively convey brands' messages to target audiences globally (Smith, 2020).

Fast and Instant Communication: Digital channels provide rapid and immediate feedback mechanisms. This capability allows brands to promptly respond to customer complaints or manage crisis situations effectively (Jones, 2019).

Cost Effectiveness: PR activities conducted on digital platforms are typically more cost-effective compared to traditional media. This affordability is particularly beneficial for small businesses aiming to maximize their outreach within budget constraints (Brown, 2018).

Targeting and Measurement Opportunities: Digital tools provide precise targeting capabilities based on demographic and psychographic data. Moreover, the effectiveness of campaigns can be instantly measured and analyzed, allowing for real-time adjustments and optimizations (Williams, 2021).

Interaction and Engagement: Digital platforms, such as social media, enable brands to engage directly with their target audience. This direct interaction fosters increased brand loyalty and strengthens relationships with consumers over time (Clark, 2020).

The disadvantages can be listed as follows;

Image Management and Crisis Management Challenges: Negative news and comments spread rapidly on digital media, reaching large audiences swift-

ly. This phenomenon can significantly impact brand perception and pose challenges in effectively managing crises and mitigating reputational damage (Miller, 2019).

Information Pollution: Accessing accurate and reliable information on digital platforms can be difficult at times. Misinformation and disinformation can damage the reputation of brands (Johnson, 2020).

Technological Dependency: Digital public relations (DPR) activities rely heavily on advanced technology and specialized software tools for effective implementation. This heightened dependence on technology can lead to increased costs for brands (Davis, 2021).

Increased Competition: The widespread adoption of digital channels has intensified competition among brands. To differentiate themselves, brands must invest significant efforts and resources to effectively stand out and engage their audiences on digital platforms (Taylor, 2020).

Privacy and Security Issues: The collection and management of data in digital PR activities raise significant privacy and security concerns. Data breaches can lead to severe reputational damage for brands (Evans, 2019).

Digital public relations is indeed pivotal in modern PR practices, offering benefits such as broad audience reach, rapid communication, and cost efficiency. However, it also introduces challenges like image management and navigating through information overload. Consequently, brands must meticulously strategize and execute their digital PR initiatives to effectively leverage its advantages while mitigating potential drawbacks.

3. Digital Public Relations Tools

Digital tools facilitate enhanced customer interaction and enable organizations to conduct public relations activities with greater efficiency and effectiveness, ultimately fostering long-term relationships with target audiences (Allagui & Breslow, 2016; Gülerman & Apaydın, 2017).

Social media plays a crucial role in digital public relations, becoming an integral component of communication strategies for PR practitioners. Many organizations have integrated popular social media tools into their websites. In public relations, these platforms are utilized for brand recognition, promotion, and audience engagement (Yağmurlu, 2013).

Digital public relations (PR) tools enable higher education institutions to effectively communicate with their target audiences and manage their brand image. These tools encompass a range of digital platforms, including social media, blogs, video content, email marketing, search engine optimi-

zation (SEO), and online events. Each tool supports different communication strategies and objectives.

In their book *The Social Media Bible*, Safko and Brake categorized the evolving public relations tools into the following groups;

- Sites where the produced content can be published (Wikipedia, Blogger, SlideShare)
- Microblogs (Twitter),
- Social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace, İnstagram),
- Photo sharing applications (Flickr, Photobucket, Picasa),
- Tools for collecting and storing information (Igoogle, Google reader, etc.) and virtual worlds (Vios, Second life),
- Audio sharing sites (Podcast, iTunes, Podbean),
- Virtual gaming channels
- Video sharing sites (Metacafe, Google video, YouTube),
- Live broadcasts (BlogTalkRadio, live 365),
- Search engines (Yahoo, Google),
- Tools that enable interpersonal communication (Skype, WhatsApp, vb.)
- Mobile tool applications (Safko & Brake, 2009).

3.1. Wikis

It refers to websites where users can interact with and manage content, including the ability to update, delete, and modify information (Bruns, 2006).

Popular wiki applications include Wikipedia, Wikia, WikiTravel, and Wikinews, with Wikipedia being the most widely used. Wikis provide a platform for sharing information and interacting with virtual communities. In public relations, wikis facilitate the dissemination of organizational information and help manage expectations through feedback from users.

3.2. Blogs

A blog is a website that features personal thoughts, comments, and often includes hyperlinks, videos, and photos provided by the author (www.merriamwebster.com/distionary/blog). These posts, also known as "weblogs," are categorized into four main types: personal, contact, sponsored, and corporate blogs (Bacon, 2005). Blogs can be further classified based on their content format into vlogs (video content), moblogs (mobile content), and photoblogs (photo content) (Alikılıç & Onat, 2007). In public relations, blogs offer a two-way communication channel, allowing organizations to engage directly with their target audience

Blogs are ideal platforms for higher education institutions to share academic and cultural content. Through blog posts, institutions can publicize their expertise and research findings to a broad audience. Additionally, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) efforts incorporated into blogs enhance the online visibility of institutions, facilitating easier access for potential students (Halligan & Shah, 2014). Content marketing, through quality and valuable blog content, aims to attract and retain the attention and loyalty of target audiences.

3.3. Microblogs

Microblogging is a form of blogging characterized by extremely short text-only posts, typically limited to 140 characters. Users can choose to publish these posts publicly or restrict them to a specific group. The brevity of microblogging messages allows them to be easily shared via various methods, including SMS texts. While microblogging shares similarities with traditional blogging, its distinct nature leads to different usage patterns (Brown, 2009). Notable examples of microblogging platforms include Twitter, Foursquare, Friendfeed, Tumblr, Myspace, LinkedIn, and Google+. These platforms often support the inclusion of visual and other types of content through links appended to the short texts (Brand Age, 2010).

These applications facilitate participation through short and instant content, with Twitter being the most popular among them. Twitter plays a significant role in organizations' reputation management and communication with their target audience.

3.4. Social Networks

Social networks are virtual environments where users with shared interests interact by exchanging thoughts, feelings, and comments (Weber, 2007). In the 2024 research, the applications that stand out in the most used social network rankings according to the number of active users are: Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, WeChat, Telegram and LinkedIn (https://www.tamindir.com). These platforms are crucial for organizational communication in public relations, allowing for effective engagement with target audiences and providing valuable insights into their support and expectations.

Various social media platforms, including blogs and Twitter, are utilized in digital public relations management. Among these, Facebook and Twitter are the most widely used by public relations professionals, with

LinkedIn and YouTube also being prominent platforms (Kharisma & Kurniawan, 2018).

3.5. Photo Sharing Sites

Applications like Flickr, Photobucket, and Picasa offer users opportunities for visual interaction. In public relations, these platforms enhance the visual design and sharing capabilities of an organization. They aid in creating a visual impression in the minds of the target audience and facilitate the measurement of audience reactions.

3.6. Audio Sharing Sites

Doyuran (2023) defined it as "a recording from a website that can be listened to on a computer or MP3 player". Podcasts can also be found in the form of video files, and files prepared in the form of videos are called "vodcasts". Common podcast platforms include Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, YouTube, Overcast.fm, and SoundCloud

3.7 Corporate websites

Websites are essential digital tools for organizations to showcase their activities and create interactive environments (Çiçek et al., 2010). Corporate websites provide public relations practitioners with a valuable platform to present a global view of how an organization serves its customers and stakeholders, and to engage in dialogue with various target audiences (Tanyıldızı, 2021). A portion of visitors who discover a website through digital PR efforts will explore its content, request additional information, or enroll in programs that align with their professional and continuing education needs.

Corporate websites, serving as a showcase for the organization, function as key promotional tools. They provide valuable information about the organization and help shape its image. In this regard, corporate websites play a crucial role in public relations.

3.8 Forums

Forums engage readers beyond a passive role by providing a space for them to express their opinions, feelings, and thoughts on events and news (Köse & Yılmaz, 2010). With the widespread use of the internet, information sharing has increased, allowing individuals to write and share their knowledge online. Forums, also known as message boards, facilitate discussions on a variety of topics such as politics, sports, art, and literature, with target audiences varying accordingly. Additionally, forums are often used for disseminating gossip (Kocabay, 2007)

3.9 Virtual newsletters

Through newsletters, organizations disseminate updates and information to their target audiences, supporting their identity, activities, and promotional efforts.

4. Purpose and Method of the Study

This study aims to identify and analyze digital public relations activities in higher education institutions in Türkiye.

The study examines digital public relations activities at higher education institutions in Türkiye, focusing on 123 state universities and 65 foundation universities for the year 2024. The sample includes Middle East Technical University, Istanbul Technical University, and Koç University, which are among the top five Turkish universities according to the 2024 ranking by Council of Higher Education (YÖK). The digital public relations practices of these universities were analyzed descriptively through their official corporate websites and social media accounts. The analyses were supported by the social media sharing graphs of universities for 2021-2024 obtained from the socialblade.com application.

4.1. Koç University

Founded in 1993 in Istanbul by Vehbi Koç, Koç University is a non-profit foundation university. With the mission of becoming a Center of Excellence, Koç University aims to advance global science by bringing together gifted students and esteemed faculty (https://www.ku.edu.tr) The university has 19,197 graduates, over 8,000 active students, and offers 22 undergraduate programs, 43 graduate programs, and 30 doctoral programs. (https://www.ku.edu.tr/kesfet/hakkimizda/sayilarla-koc-universitesi/9)

Figure 1: **Koç University Corporate Website Overview (https://www.ku.edu.tr/)**

The university's corporate website features a dynamic profile with moving announcements. The site appears in the search engine as "Koç University:#discoveryourdream". The homepage includes sections such as Re-

search, Academic, Discover, Application, and Communication. The site content comprises quick links, featured news, events, statistics under "Koç University by the Numbers," and an exploration section titled "Discover Koç University".

4.1.1. Koç University Digital Public Relations Practices

Figure 2: **Koç University PR page** *(https://pr.ku.edu.tr/)*
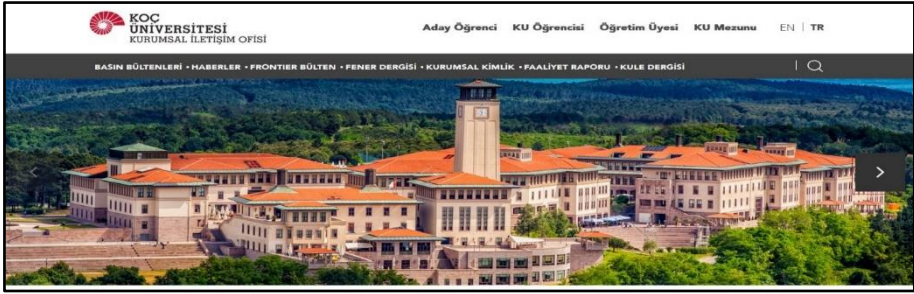
On the university's PR page, you will find sections including Press Releases, News, Frontier Bulletin, Fener Magazine, Corporate Identity, Annual Report, and Kule Magazine. The Press Releases section features bulletins published between 2010 and 2024. In 2024, Koç University issued several notable press releases, including "VEKAM's New Book Introduces Readers to the Colorful World of Photography and Postcards," which highlights a new publication on photography and postcards. Another significant release announced the commencement of "KWORKS 2024 Acceleration and Pre-Acceleration Programs." Additionally, the university recognized "Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı with the Human Development Research Award" and celebrated the opening of the "Koç University Hydrogen Technologies Center." (https://pr.ku.edu.tr/basin-bultenleri/).

Under the News heading, users can access both archived and current news categorized by subject and year. The Frontier Bulletin section contains all issues of Frontier Research News, with each bulletin available in English. The Fener Magazine, the university's online magazine, features a total of 14 published issues (https://pr.ku.edu.tr/fener-dergisi/). On the Koç University PR page, the Corporate Identity section provides links to presentation templates and the university's logo. Additionally, annual reports for the years 2013 through 2022/2023 are available on the same page (https://pr.ku.edu.tr/faaliyet-raporu/).

Figure 3: **Koç University Kule Magazine (https://pr.ku.edu.tr/kule-dergisi/)**

Kule Magazine, published by Koç University, is available online and includes a total of 37 issues.

4.1.2. Koç University Corporate Blogs

The NASAMER Law Blog, established by the Dr. Nüsret - Semahat Arsel International Commercial Law Practice and Research Center, is an online publication platform dedicated to sharing current blog posts and research articles across various fields of private law (https://nasamer.ku.edu.tr/blog/blog-hakkinda/).

Figure 4: Koç University NASAMER Blog

The Koç University Blog page features sections including "About Us," "Events," "Publications," and "Mock Trial Competitions." Additionally, various Koç University blog pages can be found through search engines, such as Koç-Kam, Blog Koç University, Koç University SKLBlog, Library News Blog, Koç University ALIS, and the Law Blog

4.1.3. Koç University Microblogs (Twitter)

Koç University joined Twitter on January 5, 2012. The account has 48,076 followers and follows 39 accounts. To date, it has shared 4,827 tweets (https://socialblade.com/twitter/user/kocuniversity).

Figure 5: **Koç University Official Twitter Account (twitter.com/kocuniversity)**

Graph 1: Koç University Twitter Followers Chart (2019-2024)
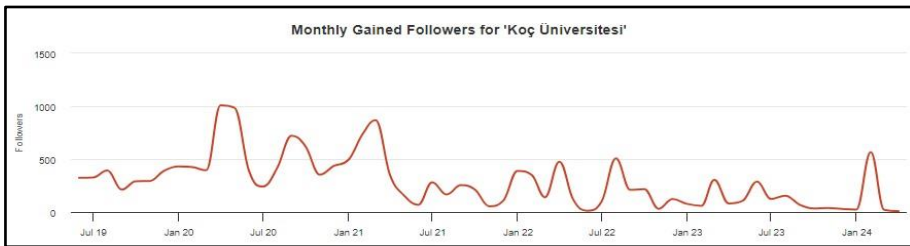
According to the graph, the fastest increase in the number of followers occurred in March 2020 (https://socialblade.com/twitter/user/ kocuniversity).

Graph 2: Koç University Tweet Graph (2019-2024)
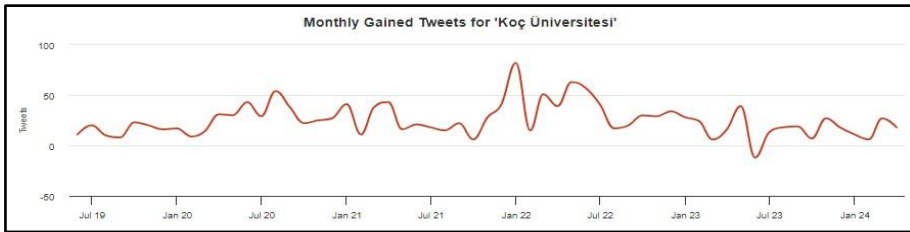
When the graph is examined, it is seen that the most tweets were shared in December 2021, while the lowest sharing rate was in May 2023 (https://socialblade.com/twitter/user/kocuniversity).

4.1.4. Koç University Social Media and Podcast Applications

Koç University actively uses various social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Google Workspace Updates, Flickr, and LinkedIn. Additionally, the university's social media page provides detailed information on the social media accounts of its faculties, departments, institutes, laboratories, research centers, and administrative units (https://www.ku.edu.tr/iletisim/sosyal-medya-hesaplari/)
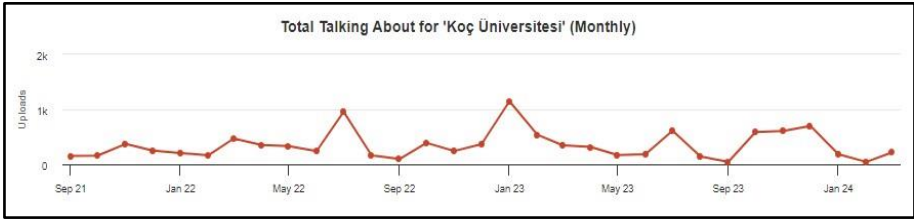
The university shared the most in January 2023 and the least in February 2024 (https://socialblade.com/facebook/page/kocuniversity/monthly).
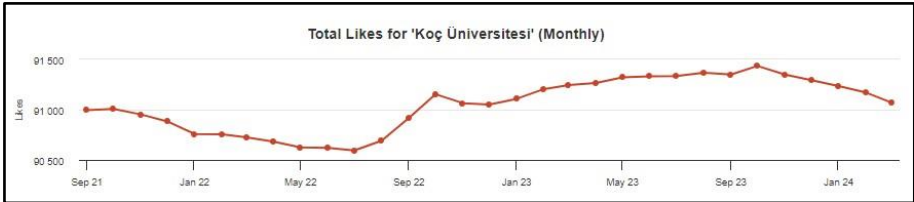
The university's Facebook like rate was highest in October 2023 and lowest in July 2022 (https://socialblade.com/facebook/page/ kocuniversity/monthly).

Graph 5 : Koç University Instagram Followers Graph (2019-2024)

The University has an ever-increasing follower graph over the years (https://socialblade.com/instagram/user/kocuniversity/monthly).
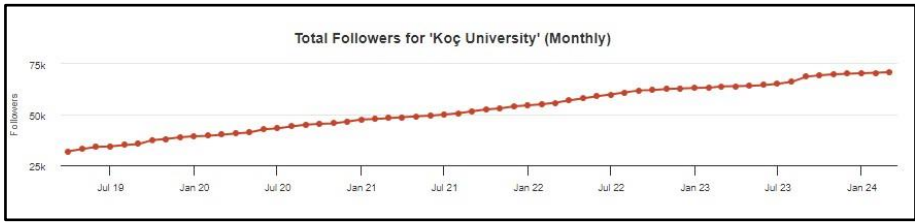
Graph 6: Koç University Instagram Post Sharing Graph (2019-2024)
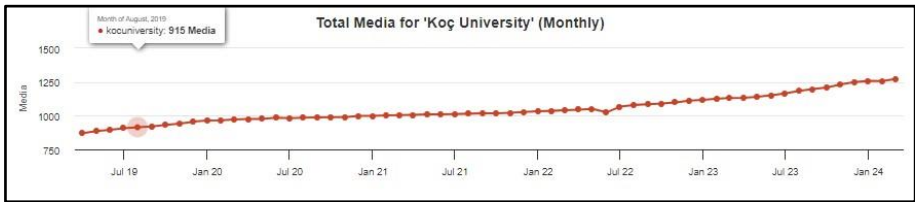
Although the university's media sharing has been on a steady upward trend, the lowest sharing was in June 2022 (https://socialblade.com/instagram/user/kocuniversity/monthly).

Figure 8: Koç University Official YouTube Channel (*https://www.youtube.com/@kukocuniversity*)
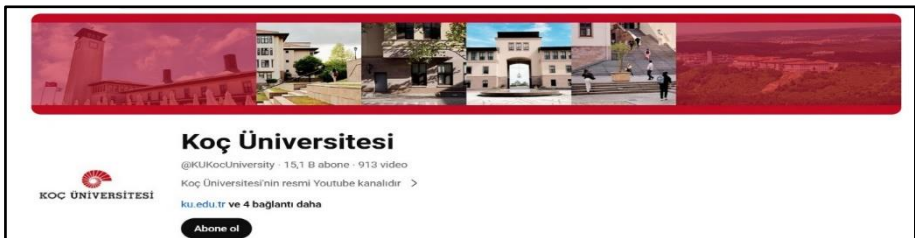
Graph 7: Koç University YouTube Channel Post Graph (2021-2024)
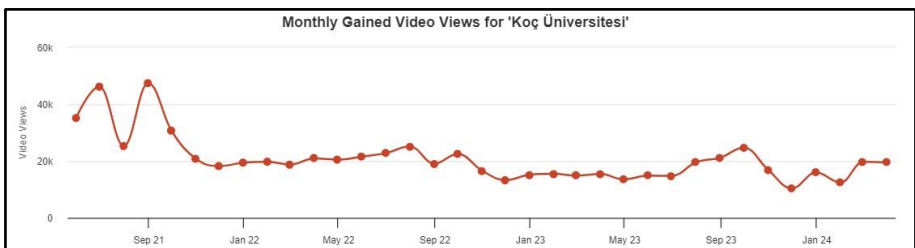
Koç University's YouTube channel shows a generally declining trend in video uploads. The highest number of uploads occurred in August 2021, while the lowest was in November 2023 (https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/kukocuniversity).

Graph 8: Koç University YouTube Channel Subscriber Graph (2021-2024)
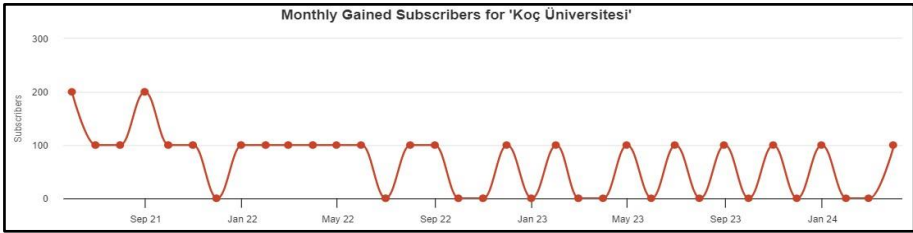
The University's subscriber graph shows fluctuating trends, with continuous increases and decreases. The peak number of subscribers was reached in May 2021, but there were also periods where the subscriber count dropped to zero (https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/ kukocuniversity).

Figure 9: Koç University Official Flickr Account (https://www.flickr.com/photos/kocuniversity/)

Figure 10 : Koç University Official LinkedIn Account

Source: https://tr.linkedin.com/school/kocuniversity/

Figure 11: Koç University Podcasts (https://library.ku.edu.tr/hakkinda/kutuphane-podcastleri/)
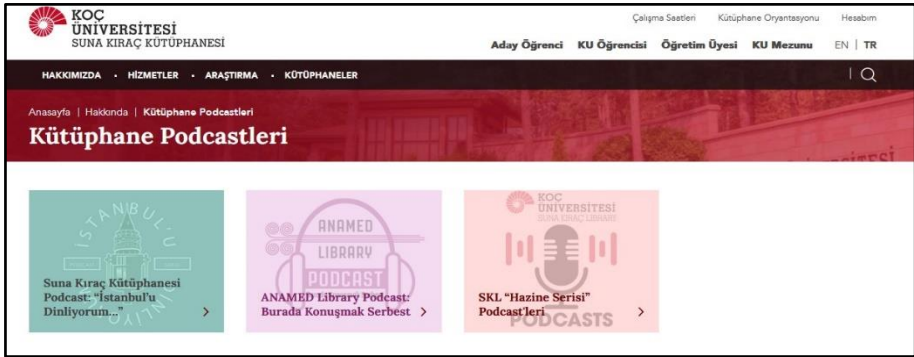
The University also produces podcasts, including those focused on the Hospital and alumni.

4.2. Middle East Technical University

The university started education on November 15, 1956, under the name of "Middle East Institute of Technology" in order to "contribute to the development of Turkey and Middle Eastern countries and to train experts in the fields of science and social sciences." The university, with English as its medium of instruction, currently has 26,251 students and 147,756 alumni. It offers 41 undergraduate programs, 107 master's programs, 72 doctoral programs, 17 accredited programs, and 47 interdisciplinary programs (http://ilkbakista.odtu.edu.tr/#section1).

Figure 12: METU Corporate Website Overview

The university's corporate website features a dynamic profile with moving announcements. The site's search engine description reads, "METU - Middle East Technical University: We Can Change the World." The homepage includes headings such as About METU, Academics, Services, Life on Campus, Research, University Candidates, and Support Us. The site content is organized into sections like METU at a Glance, Announcements & Events, ODTÜDEN.com.tr, METU News, and Quick Links (https://www.metu.edu.tr/tr)

4.2.1. METU Digital Public Relations Practices

Figure 13: METU PR Page (https://halkilis.metu.edu.tr/tr)
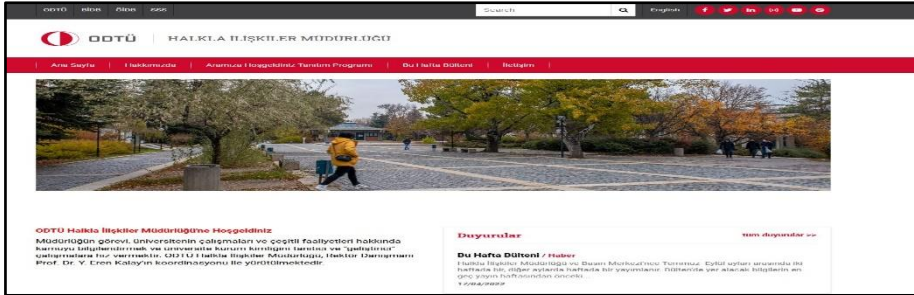
On the PR page of the university, sections include "Home Page," "About Us," "Welcome to Us," "Promotion Program," "This Week's Press Release," and "Communication." Under the "This Week's Press Release" heading, the latest release is number 1482, dated March 18-31, 2024 (https://halkilis.metu.edu.tr/tr).

METU News offers access to both archived and current news. The most recent article, published on April 3, 2024, is titled "Children Will Tell About the Project of Their Dreams on April 23rd: 'You Design the World of the Future' Contest is Being Organized." The news website includes main headings such as Home Page, Research, Events, Awards, Student, Alumni, and Publication News. When the link to ODTÜLÜ Journal, the university's online journal, was opened, it was found that 72 issues have been published and are available for access (https://odtulu.metu.edu.tr/).

Figure 14: METU News Page (https://haber.metu.edu.tr/tr/)

Figure 15: ODTÜLÜ Journal (https://odtulu.metu.edu.tr/)
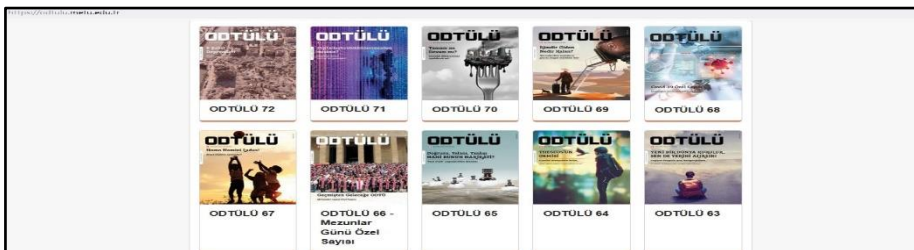
4.2.2. METU Corporate Blogs

There are a total of 4,778 blogs on the university's Blog service, which is accessed through METU Blog Service. The most recently updated blog titles include "Neomatrix," "Compevo," and "Dengiz Research Group." (https://blog.metu.edu.tr/)

Figure 16: METU Blog Page (https://neomatrix.metu.edu.tr/)

4.2.3. METU Microblogs (Twitter)

Middle East Technical University joined Twitter on September 25, 2009. The account has 181,081 followers and follows 4 accounts. To date, it has shared 7,019 tweets (https://socialblade.com/twitter/user/metu_odtu).

Figure 17: METU Official Twitter Account (https://twitter.com/METU_ODTU)

Graph 9: Middle East Technical University Twitter Followers Graph (2019-2024)
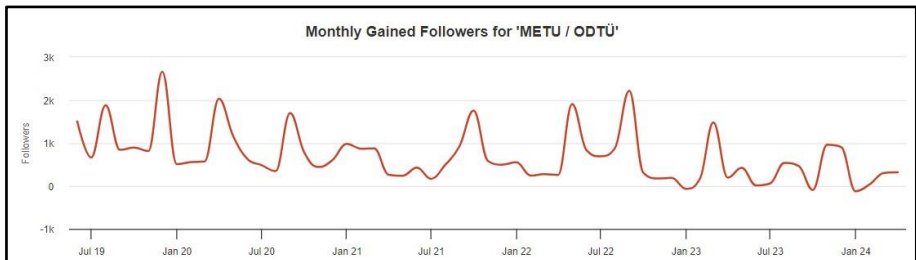
According to the graph, the fastest increase in the number of followers was in November 2019, while the lowest number of followers was in December 2023 (https://socialblade.com/twitter/user/metu_odtu).

Graph 10: Middle East Technical University Tweet Graph (2019-2024)
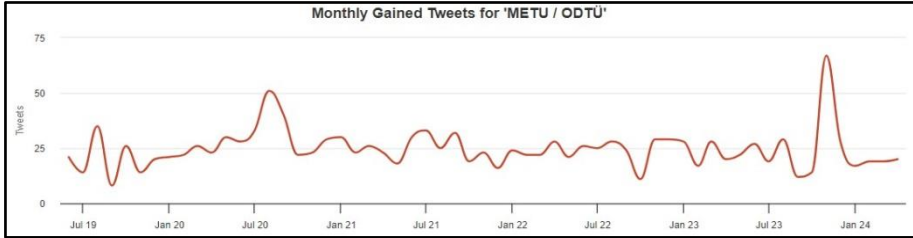
When examining the tweet graph of Middle East Technical University, the most intense sharing occurred in October 2023, while the least sharing was observed in August 2019 (https://socialblade.com/twitter/user/metu_odtu)

4.2.4. METU Social Media and Podcast Applications

Middle East Technical University actively uses Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Spotify, and LinkedIn among social media platforms. The university's social media page also provides detailed links to the accounts of its faculties and departments, institutes, societies, university radio, and other units (https://www.metu.edu.tr/tr/sosyal-aglar).

Figure 18: METU Official Facebook Account

Source: https://www.facebook.com/MiddleEastTechnicalUniversity
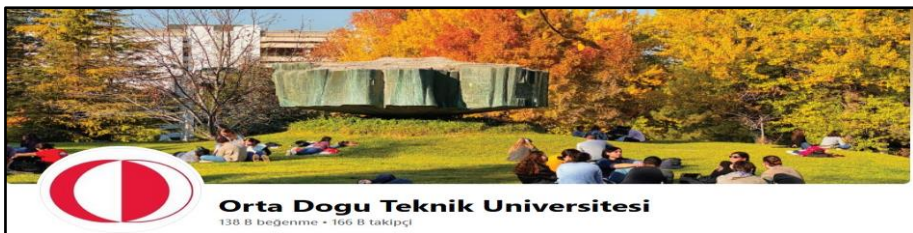
Graph 11: METU Facebook Post Graph (2021-2024)
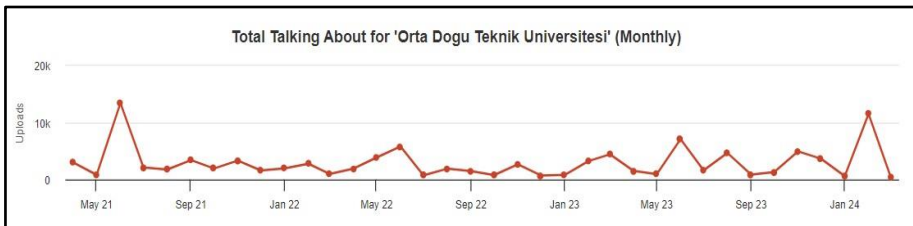
The most shared date of the university is June 2021, while the least shared date is March 2024 (https://socialblade.com/facebook/page/ middleeasttechnicaluniversity/monthly).

Graph 12: METU Facebook Likes Graph (2021-2024)
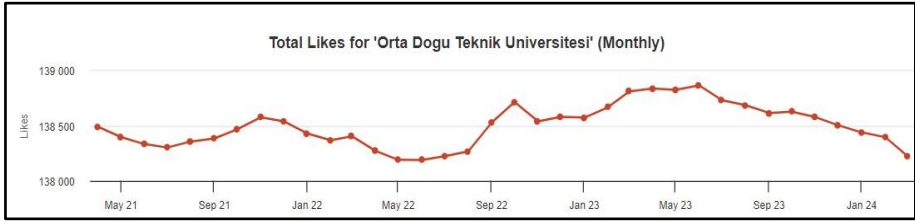
The university's posts received the most likes in June 2023 and the fewest likes in June 2022.

Figure 19: METU Official Instagram Account (https://www.instagram.com/metu_odtu/)

Graph 13: METU Instagram Followers Graph (2019-2024)
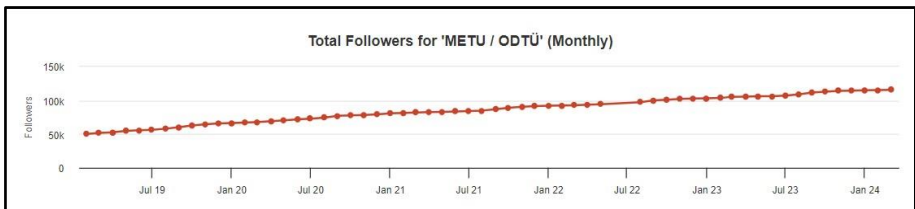
The University has an ever-increasing follower graph over the years
(https://socialblade.com/instagram/user/metu_odtu/monthly)

Graph 14: METU Instagram Post Graph (2019-2024)
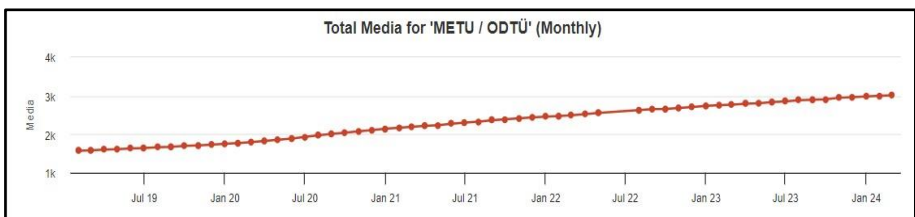
When the graphs of METU's official Instagram account are analyzed, there is a regularly increasing post graph (https://socialblade.com/instagram/user/metu_ odtu/monthly)

Figure 20: METU Official LinkedIn Account
(https://tr.linkedin.com/school/orta-dogu-teknik-universitesi)
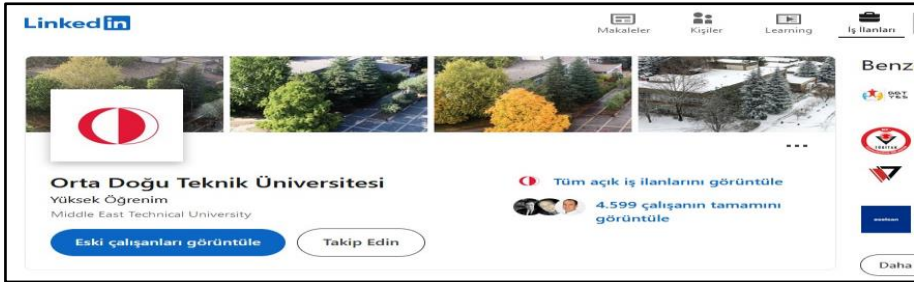
Figure 21: METU Official YouTube Channel (https://www.youtube.com/user/middleastechuniv)
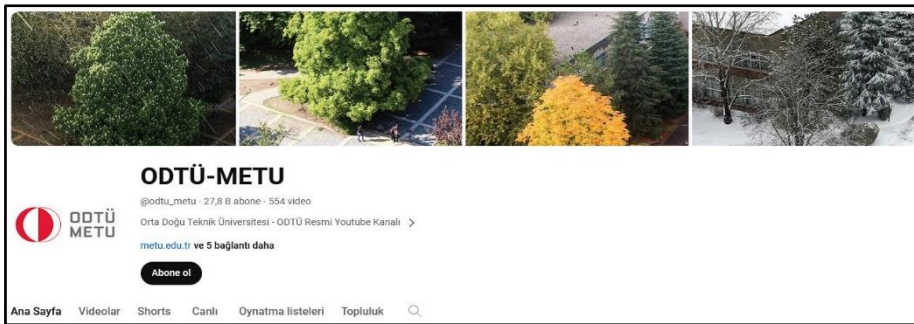
Graph 15: METU YouTube Channel Post Graph (2021-2024)
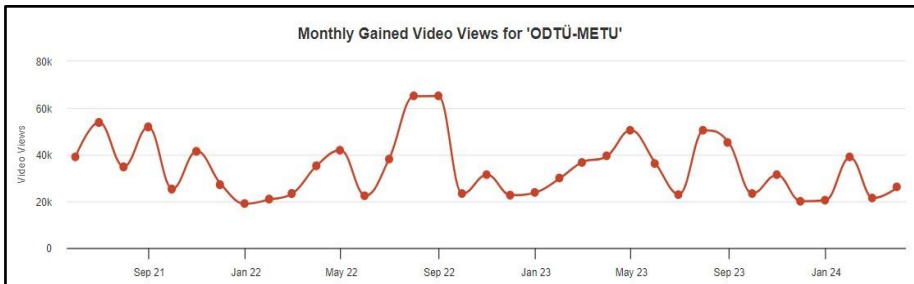
The video uploads on the university's YouTube channel exhibit a fluctuating trend. The highest number of posts occurred in August 2022, while the lowest was in December 2021 (https://socialblade.com/youtube/user/middleastechuniv).
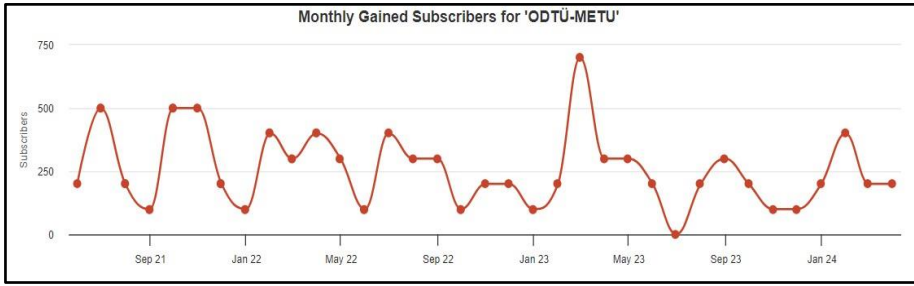
The subscriber graph of METU's YouTube channel also shows fluctuation. The highest number of subscribers was recorded in February 2023, while the lowest was in June 2023 (https://socialblade.com/youtube/ user/middleastechuniv).

Figure 22: METU Podcast Broadcasting

Source:
https://open.spotify.com/user/q0sfvg182hvv11iyju47404qs?si=02d062fafdb04edd&nd=1&dlsi=c3e10a8
fcd60401e

Figure 23: Radio METU (https://www.radyoodtu.com.tr/)
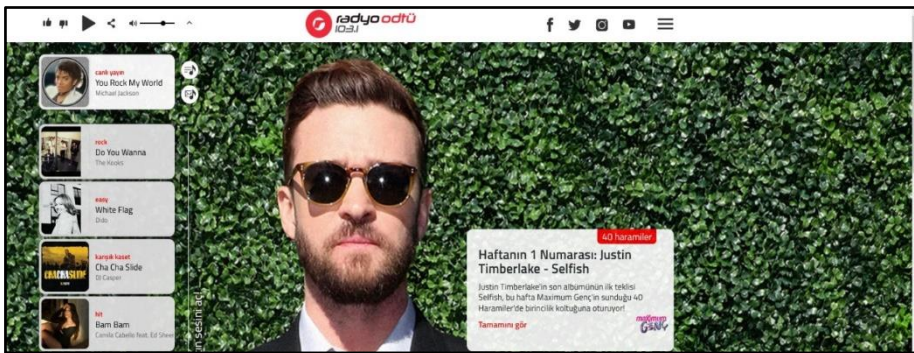
University radio continues its broadcasting life with the slogan "turn up the volume of life" with a frequency of 103.1.

4.3. Istanbul Technical University

Istanbul Technical University (ITU) was founded in 1773 as *"Imperial Naval Engineering"* during the reign of Mustafa III. ITU has played a leading role in innovation throughout the Ottoman Empire and the modernization of the Republic. Over its more than two centuries of history, ITU has educated numerous statesmen, business leaders, bureaucrats, and scientists. The university currently has 37,092 students, 2,277 academicians, and offers 108 undergraduate and 188 graduate programs (https://itu.edu.tr/ tarihce).

Figure 24: ITU Corporate Website (https://itu.edu.tr/)

When the corporate website of the university is examined, there is a news article on the first page with the title "Science and Technology Talks" by Prof. Dr. Orhan İnce, which directs to the YouTube page of the university. The website's search engine entry is "ITU/Istanbul Technical University/1773." The front page includes headings such as About ITU, Education, Research, International, Life on Campus, Library, and ITUPORTAL. The site's content comprises sections like News at a Glance, Events, Upcoming Events, Scientific Research Projects, ITU in Numbers, Virtual Tour, and ITU Digital Applications.

4.3.1. Istanbul Technical University Digital Public Relations Practices

Figure 25: ITU Communications Directorate (https://ipd.itu.edu.tr/ofisler/kurumsal-iletisim-ofisi)

On the ITU Communication Directorate page, the primary headings include ITU Home Page, ITU News, and ITU Events. The page also features

subheadings such as Home Page, Who We Are, Offices (Media and Communication Office, Visual Communication Office, Promotion Office, Corporate Relations and Alumni Communication Office, Event and Protocol Branch Directorate, ITU Radio), and Corporate Identity and Communication.

Under the ITU News heading, users can access both archived and current news organized by year and topic. The most recent news article, published on April 10, 2024, is titled "ITU Ranks 95th in the World in the Field of 'Engineering and Technology'." The news website features headings such as Home Page, News, Video, and Imprint. Additionally, through the "ITU Publishing House" link, users can access ITU books, proceedings, workshops, scientific journals, and the e-catalog. The university's publishing house includes nine scientific journals available online, with the ITU Journal accessible in two issues for 2023-2024 (https://ituyayinevi. itu.edu.tr/anasayfa).

Figure 26: ITU Publishing House Page (https://ituyayinevi.itu.edu.tr/)

4.3.2. Istanbul Technical University Corporate Blogs

The university has blog pages such as ITU Blog, ITU Core Blog, Temel Studio Blog, ITU ARI Technopolis Blog.

Figure 27: ITU ARI Technopolis Blog Page (https://blog.ariteknokent.com.tr/)

4.3.3. ITU Microblogs (Twitter)

Istanbul Technical University (ITU) joined Twitter on July 7, 2010. The account has 96,709 followers and follows 194 accounts. To date, ITU has posted 11,046 tweets, maintaining an active presence on the platform (https://socialblade.com/twitter/user/itu1773).

Figure 28: ITU Official Twitter Account (https://twitter.com/itu1773)

Graph 17: ITU Twitter Followers Graph (2019-2024)
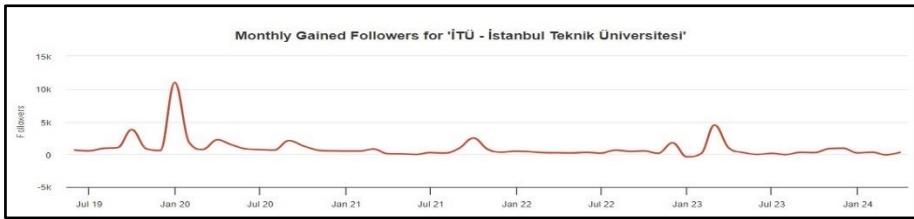
When examining the follower graph of İTÜ's official Twitter account, the highest increase in followers was observed in December 2019, while the lowest number of followers was recorded in December 2022 (https://socialblade.com/twitter/user/itu1773/monthly).

Graph 18: ITU Tweet Posting Graph (2019-2024)
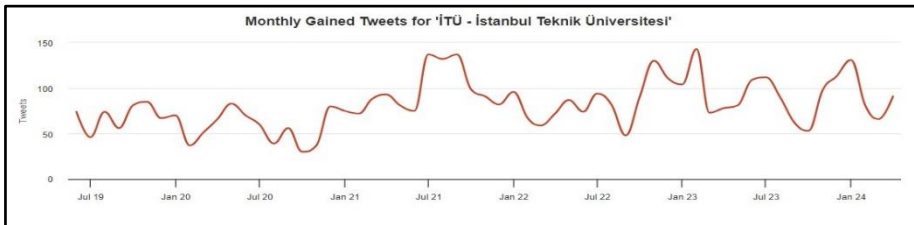
The most tweets from the ITU official Twitter account were sent in January 2023, while the fewest tweets were sent in September 2020 (https://socialblade.com/twitter/user/itu1773/monthly).

4.3.4. ITU Social Media and Podcast Applications

Istanbul Technical University actively utilizes Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Spotify, Flickr, and LinkedIn for its social media presence. Addi-

tionally, the university's social media page provides a comprehensive compilation of posts across these platforms (https://medya.itu.edu.tr/).

Figure 29: ITU Official Facebook Account

Source: https://www.facebook.com/itu1773

Graph 19: ITU Official Facebook Account Post Graph (*2019-2024*)
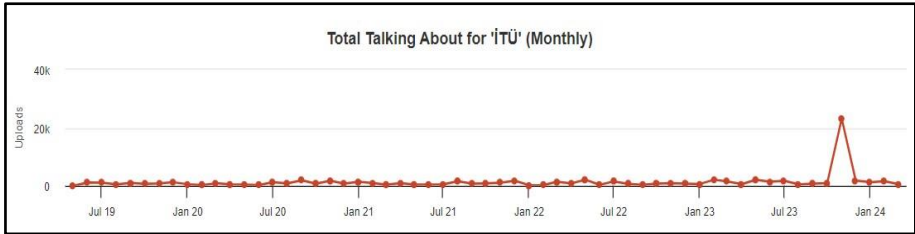
The university's Facebook account generally exhibited a steady sharing pattern, with the highest number of uploads occurring in November 2023 (https://socialblade.com/facebook/page/itu1773/monthly).

Graph 20: ITU Official Facebook Account Likes Graph (*2019-2024*)
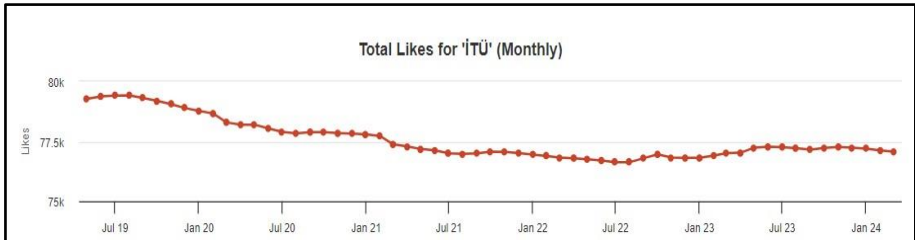
The university's likes graph generally shows a declining trend. The peak number of likes was in August 2019, while the lowest was recorded in August 2022 (https://socialblade.com/facebook/page/itu1773/monthly).

Figure 30: ITU Official Instagram Account (https://www.instagram.com/itu1773/)

Graph 21: ITU Instagram Followers Graph (2019-2024)
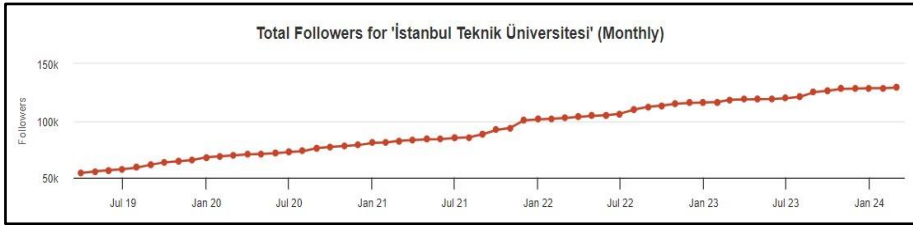
When examining the follower graph of ITU's official Instagram account, the highest increase in followers occurred in November 2023, while the lowest number of followers was recorded in April 2019 (https://socialblade.com/instagram/user/itu1773/monthly).
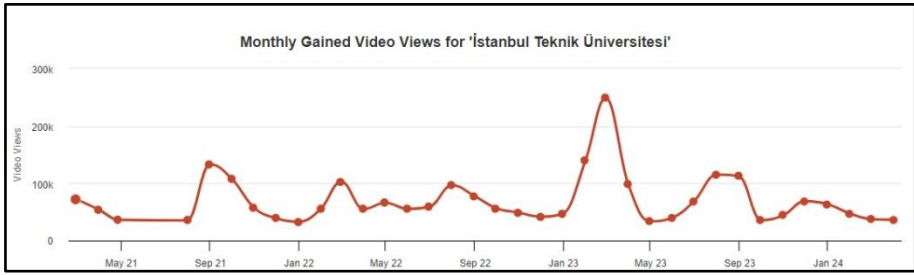
Graph 22: : ITU Instagram Post Graph (2019-2024)
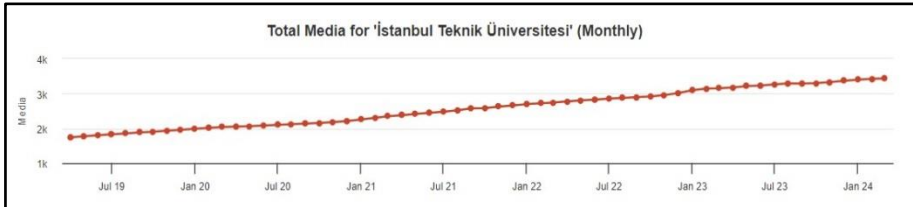
The university's Instagram post graph shows a steady increase.

Figure 31: ITU Official YouTube Account (https://www.youtube.com/itu1773)

Graph 23: ITU YouTube Channel Post Graph (2021-2024)

The ITU official YouTube channel saw the highest number of uploads in February 2023, while the fewest uploads were recorded in December 2021 (https://socialblade.com/youtube/c/itu1773).

Graph 24: ITU YouTube Channel Subscriber Graph (2021-2024)
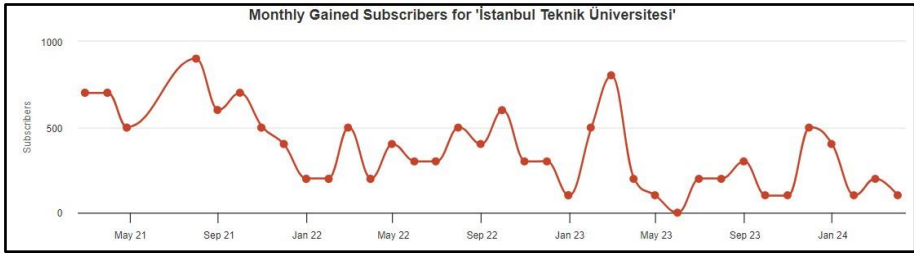
Participants subscribed to the university's YouTube channel the most in July 2021 and the least in May 2023 (https://socialblade.com/youtube/c/itu1773).

Figure 32: ITU Official LinkedIn Account (https://www.linkedin.com/school/itu1773/)

Figure 33: ITU Podcast Application (Spotify)

Source: https://open.spotify.com/user/zyxuocl44a46rwsppplgk55v8

Figure 34: ITU Official Flickr Account (https://www.flickr.com/photos/itu1773/)

Figure 35: ITU Ginova WhatsApp Application

Source: https://ginova.itu.edu.tr/itu-ginova-whatsapp-duyuru-kanali-acildi/
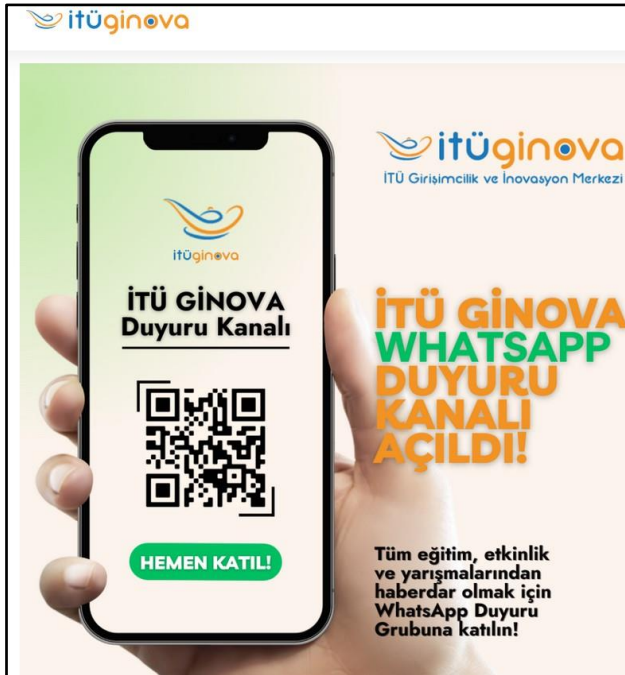
Conclusion and Evaluation

Digital public relations has become an essential communication tool for higher education institutions. Replacing traditional PR methods, digital strategies allow institutions to reach broader audiences and engage more directly and effectively with their target groups. Digital PR encompasses various platforms, including social media, blogs, video content, and online events, which enhance the brand value, reputation, and visibility of higher education institutions.

The examples of Koç University, METU, and ITU demonstrate how effectively leveraging digital PR strategies can significantly enhance an institution's brand value. By adopting innovative and creative digital PR approaches, these universities are forging robust connections with current and prospective students, alumni, parents, and other stakeholders. Such strategies facilitate the reach, information dissemination, and engagement with target audiences, thereby strengthening the institutions' brand image and reputation.

The effective use of digital public relations strategies offers higher education institutions significant advantages across multiple areas. Social media campaigns, for instance, bolster student recruitment efforts by reaching potential candidates directly. Blog posts and academic content highlight research activities and academic achievements, enhancing the institution's scholarly reputation. Video content and online events provide insights into campus life and academic programs, helping prospective students make informed decisions. Furthermore, digital platforms facilitate ongoing engagement with alumni, supporting both alumni relations and fundraising initiatives.

In the future, as digital platforms continue to evolve, the significance and influence of digital PR strategies will grow even more. Higher education institutions must adapt to the digital age by continually updating their communication strategies and adopting innovative approaches. Embracing these strategies will not only provide institutions with a competitive edge but also help in building a strong global brand image and forging enduring connections with their target audiences.

The study revealed that Middle East Technical University, Istanbul Technical University, and Koç University—recognized among the top universities by Turkey's Council of Higher Education—demonstrate a direct correlation between the quality and success of their public relations activities. All three institutions actively utilize social media applications, indicating their commitment to effective digital communication practices.

The analysis of blog applications shows that Koç University and Istanbul Technical University lead in the number of blog platforms. Meanwhile, Middle East Technical University (METU) was the pioneer in adopting microblogging applications, whereas Koç University joined these platforms later. Additionally, METU stands out for its high follower count, reflecting its strong presence and engagement in the digital space.

Graph 25: Comparison Graph of Koç University, METU and ITU Twitter Statistics (https://socialblade.com/twitter/compare/kocuniversity/metu_odtu/itu1773)
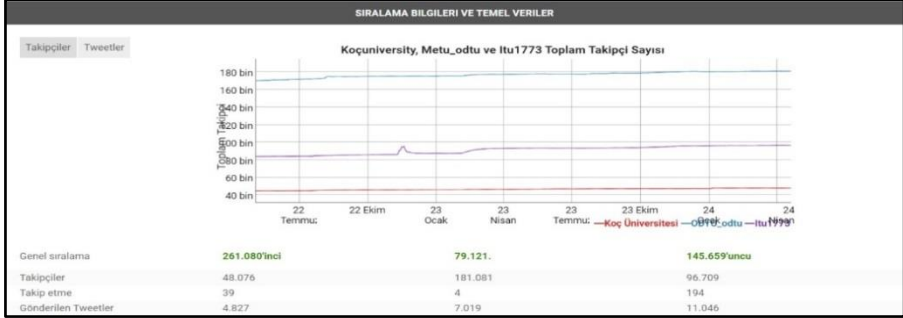
In social media applications, Middle East Technical University (METU) leads with the highest number of likes and followers on Facebook. On Instagram, Istanbul Technical University (ITU) holds the top position for the most likes and followers. METU was also the first among the universities to establish a YouTube channel, while ITU excels with the highest number of video uploads and subscribers. When it comes to the number of views of posts, the ranking is as follows: METU ranks first, followed by ITU, and then Koç University.

Graph 26: Comparison Graph of Koç University, METU and ITU YouTube Channel Statistics (https://socialblade.com/youtube/compare/UC4yNKi3YXWKMdEBejCYOhA/kukocuniversity/itu1773)
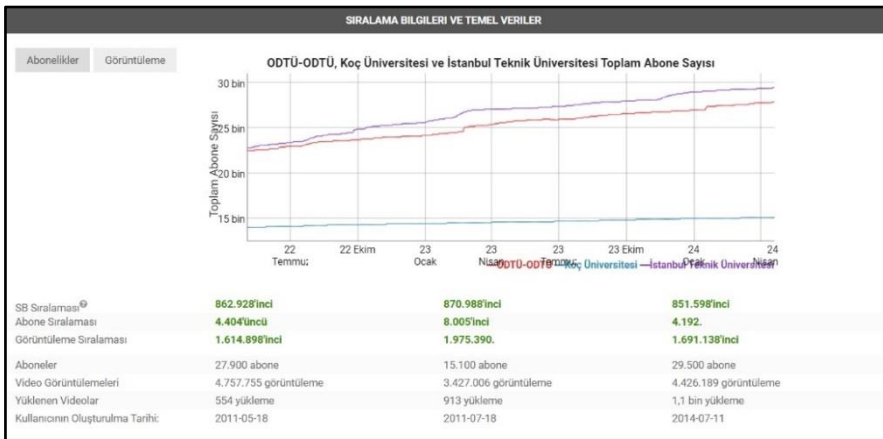
Istanbul Technical University (ITU) stands out with the highest number of followers and graduates on LinkedIn, a key platform for career planning. Among universities, Middle East Technical University (METU) provides a direct access link to Spotify for podcast content. ITU leads in follower count on Spotify, while Koç University utilizes "vekam" as a podcast application, primarily for audiobooks and seminars available through their library.

Koç University excels in the number of online press releases and magazines, showing a high level of activity in this area. Istanbul Technical University (ITU) effectively utilizes WhatsApp for rapid communication and demonstrates strong engagement with mobile tools. Additionally, ITU's use of mobile applications is notable. Koç University stands out for its active use of newer and more visual platforms, such as Flickr.

Koç University is recognized for its modern approach to digital public relations and boasts the most effective PR page. Istanbul Technical University (ITU), the oldest of the three, excels in news and printed publications. All three universities—Koç University, METU, and ITU—ensure their PR pages are accessible in English, reflecting their commitment to international publications and foreign language communication.

In conclusion, digital public relations is crucial for the success of higher education institutions. Leading universities like Koç University, METU, and ITU set a benchmark in digital PR, inspiring other institutions to develop strategies that meet the evolving demands of the digital age. By effectively utilizing digital public relations strategies, higher education institutions can enhance their brand value and reputation, forge strong and enduring connections with their target audiences, and secure ongoing success.

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d i g i t a l
public relations

Public relations emerged with the efforts of people to live together and to influence each other and gradually became systematized over time. In particular, the efforts of organizations and managers to establish and maintain a relationship with the public based on two-way communication and mutual understanding have played an important role in the development of public relations. One of the most important factors that cannot be ignored in this development is communication technologies. Public relations has benefited from the communication tools and methods unique to each era and has rapidly adapted them to its own structure.

This book contains 16 studies on digital public relations and its various application areas. These cover topics such as tools in digital public relations, artificial intelligence, internal communication, real-time interaction applications, corporate image, corporate social responsibility, lobbying, crisis communication, corporate advertising, reputation management, and sustainability. The chapter authors have evaluated the aforementioned topics within the context of digital communication.

editors

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