Use of Social Media in PR: A Change of Trend

Tang Mui Joo, Chan Eang Teng

Abstract—The use of social media has become more defined. It has been widely used for the purpose of business. More marketers are now using social media as tools to enhance their businesses. Whereas on the other hand, there are more and more people spending their time through mobile apps to be engaged in the social media sites like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and others. Social media has even become common in Public Relations (PR). It has become number one platform for creating and sharing content. In view to this, social media has changed the rules in PR where it brings new challenges and opportunities to the profession. Although corporate websites, chat-rooms, email customer response facilities and electronic news release distribution are now viewed as standard aspects of PR practice, many PR practitioners are still struggling with the impact of new media though the implementation of social media is potentially reducing the cost of communication. It is to the point that PR practitioners are not fully embracing new media, they are ill-equipped to do so and they have a fear of the technology. Somehow that social media has become a new style of communication that is characterized by conversation and community. It has become a platform that allows individuals to interact with one another and build relationship among each other. Therefore, in the use of business world, consumers are able to interact with those companies that have joined any social media. Based on their experiences with social networking site interactions, they are also exposed to personal interaction while communicating. This paper is to study the impact of social media to PR. This paper discovers the potential changes of PR practices in a developing country like Malaysia. Eventually the study reflects on how PR practitioners are actually using social media in the country. This paper is based on two theories in its development of this research foundation. Media Ecology Theory is to support the impact and changes to PR. Social Penetration Theory is to reflect on how the use of social media is among PRs. This research is using survey with PR practitioners in its data collection. The results have shown that PR professionals value social media more than they actually use it and the way of organizations communicate had been changed due to the transformation of social media.

Keywords—New media, social media, PR.

I. INTRODUCTION

SOCIAL media has been defined by one of the scholars as the platform that connects people together by ignoring the geographical factor, and also the opportunity to produce and share it with the community [1]. Thus, social media has changed the community into online community where the popular social media sites used by millions of people on a daily basis [2].

Social media is an extension of traditional word of mouth networks, which is always the most effective tools of disseminating information, and with the enablement of technology, it allows anyone with internet connection to access and voice their opinion through the social media [3].

Tang Mui Joo and Chan Eang Teng are with Tunku Abdul Rahman University College, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (e-mail: tangmj@acd.tarc.edu.my, chanet@acd.tarc.edu.my).

Social media is not only widely used by individuals. Social media networks are used as tools for the organizations to build relationships with publics as well as providing variety of information and services to a diverse group of direct and indirect publics [4]. However, although the social media has become an effective tool for the organization to communicate with the publics, many of the PR are still struggling with the challenges or impacts of social media, and most of the research shown that PR practitioners are still not fully embracing the social media [5]. Other than PR in the loop of social media, the social networking environment in Malaysia is also growing especially in the media industry like advertising where the advertisers start to promote their products and services in social media sites because the audiences are mostly connected through several social networks [6].

Social media has changed the rules in PR game where it brings new challenges and opportunities to the profession [7]. PR practitioners have found that through the emerging of social media, the message could be widely spread to a huge community especially to those audiences that have been neglected before. Thus, social media has changed the role of the PR practice in becoming more demanding where the practitioners must able to move faster and think quicker than ever before.

In addition to the above view, social media has shifted the previous recognized power of 'word of mouth' to the power of 'word of mouse' which generally divert the PR practitioners' attention towards its importance with the fluctuating social media sites [4]. However, in some instances, the unethical or inappropriate practice of adopting social media sites has resulted to negative consequences that affected the public image as well as the organizations reputations [8]. Thus, the emerging of the social media provides a range of changes and implications either positive or negative to PR practitioners which they adopt it in their practice when serving their clients or companies [4].

This paper has looked into two major research problems in regards to the trend of PR. One has been the pattern usage and habit of the social media is increasing year by year. Based on Social Media Statistics, one of the social media sites which is Facebook has reached 665 million daily active users [9]. This also shows that social media has become dominant in today's society and its power has brought changes to several industries especially communication industry like PR. Secondly, PR industry has undergone a radical change especially during the emergence and widespread of adoption in social media sites like Facebook and Twitter among the public [10]. The power of

social media in the society is getting stronger day by day where the publics are no longer passive in receiving information from traditional media since social media allows the publics to have more control of what they read, hear and watch [4]. Therefore, PR practitioners have re-examined the traditional communication methods and consider how they may apply their work to the online world at the common use of social media now.

This research paper is therefore at the interest to find out the influences of social media in the way of communications in Malaysia. It is to discover the changes of PR practice in Malaysia; due to the advancement of technology, the way of PR communicating with its publics has changed from one-way communication to two-way communication. At last, it is to find out the relationship between social media and the practice of PR in Malaysia which reflects the trend of PR in the country.

II. TRIANGULAR RELATIONSHIPS / ROLES BETWEEN SOCIAL MEDIA, TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION AND PR

Social media can help to build up good PR as it allows the public to engage directly with the organization which will build trust and better relationships among them [11]. The increasing popularity of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, have contributed to the rapid growth of consumer based medium [4]. This is further reflected that more than 50% of people are using social media to learn about what is happening in the world rather than the official news source [12]. Thus, the nature of social media sites reveals a potential chance for PR to generate trust and relationships amongst users [2].

The emerging of social media in PR has caused press releases, articles and events to become less effective than before because the audience and their preferred channels of information have changed. Besides that, both PR practitioners and journalists perceive that social media has helped them to enhance the source-reporter relationship as they are able to interact with each other without any barriers [13]. With the emerging of social media, it has brought in the "old" and "new" rules of press release into PR practice where the "new" press release will be delivered directly to target publics via the Web [14].

Besides the new rules of news content, the commercial interests that engage with the social network sites have brought in consideration and caution. Social media is an open environment where it allows the users to talk back if they do or do not like what the organization is doing or saying. In this view, social media encourages two-way symmetrical communication among its users. It has allowed PR practitioners to change their communication way which they will personally reach as well as interact with the publics and stakeholders, and will end up for mutual beneficial relationships [13].

PR in Singapore and Malaysia also face major challenges since the increasing popularity of social media like Friendster, internet forum and blog [15]. Furthermore, Internet has become a new phenomenon for PR to communicate directly with the audience and this causes the PR practitioners now to be heavily equipped with Internet facilities. Confidentiality is no longer available in PR industry due to the rapid growth of modern media, electronic and print media, and not to mention the vast flow of information via the Internet. Thus, social media has become the audience "conversational human voice" and this has offered new possibilities for the traditional PR concept of not fully applying the real-time and conversational nature of social media [15].

Social media has changed the setting of the PR in many ways, and the most significant change is the shift from one-way PR communication to a two-way or multi-way communication [16]. The organization now is communicating via social media platforms which allows them to have one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many communication, and this has transformed the PR practice. Furthermore, the practice of two-way communication by PR falls under the two-way symmetrical communication in the modern era, and the key elements of this model allows the organization to engage in a real conversation or dialogues with the stakeholders not only persuading them but also to listen, learn as well as to adapt organizational behavior in order to achieve the communication process [17].

PR practitioners that are engaging in two-way symmetrical communication model, it will help them to make the organization be more effective in communicating with the public [18]. PR practitioners that practice the two-way symmetrical model rely on honest two-way communication where there is give-and-take rather than focus on one-way persuasion [17]. This is also that through the mixed motive approach in two-way symmetric, the PR not only are able to send out the message on their own interest but also reach a solution that is acceptable to the other side [18].

III. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG PR PRACTITIONERS

The widespread of social media among the PR practitioners has revealed the term of 'Public Relations (PR) 2.0'. Web 2.0 social media has helped PR to put their public back in their practice [8]. In the digital era, the PR practitioners no longer emphasize in messaging and relationship management but towards the practice of overseeing the online community as a resource. This has created new job descriptions into PR practice including 'social media strategist', 'online community manager', and 'digital care manager' [19].

Digital PR will have the opportunity to directly persuade their audience by answering their questions, provide more information to them as well as explaining to them especially when they are unsatisfied with the organizations' products or services [20]. Digital PR is involved in disseminating information like issuing the online news release or any updates regarding its organization services to the stakeholders, as well as leveraging the power of journalism networks [21]. Other than that, social media has also assisted PR in the area of publicity. Several studies have confirmed those buyers in the journey of making decision. Buyers will look for the products and service information in their own way especially through the internet rather than using traditional marketing communication. Therefore, the uses of social media would have helped PR practitioners to reduce the cost of communication and advertising indirectly. Social media is not only useful for

interactive and communication, it has also become an essential platform to allow PR practitioners to access wider area of information in order to make their thinking, idea, and insight more knowledgeable [22].

The evolution of the new media technology has met the requirements in creating an effective as well as an interactive online social media to the users where the users can easily consume (read, listen, watch, download, search), share (publish, upload), communicate (post status, comment, chatting, rate), facilitate (tag, recommend) online [23]. Social media tends to be a more interactive platform when it engages with the smart devices and web-based technologies which the community or individual social media users are able to share, communicate, create, modify and discuss user-generated content [24]. The social media has offered a way for the users to keep in touch not only with the existing communities that belong offline but also to those people who does not normally communicate for a long period of time. So, it is more obvious that the social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Orkut, Myspace, Skype etc., are extensively being used by the users for the purpose of communication [25]. Besides that, in the advance era of technology, embracing social media is no longer a strategic business option but is a requirement as well a huge opportunity for an organization [26]. This is because of the interactive computing system that explores social media across various areas (sports, education, entertainment, politics, analysis of video broadcast, climate change), has become a media monitoring tools for the organization to provide the flows of relevant information, timely feedback from the public, as well as the stakeholder perception through the human-computer interaction [27]. This approach is encouraging two-way communication among the organization and its publics, ultimately opening the opportunity for building up mutually beneficial relationships. Thus, social media sites have been prefigured as innovative interactions that allow for network communication to occur instantaneously [13].

IV. Impacts of Social Media in Communication and PR

The social media has drastically changed the way how we communicate. Previously, a conversation is communicated via email, on a land-line telephone, as well as face-to-face or in person [28]. However, due to the existence of social media, it provides the society with a whole new way to communicate which they will learn new language and writes or communicates to vast audiences [29]. The biggest change that is brought by social media is that there is no filter in the message content that are being shared or published in the sites, and the social media has also become one of the dominant ways we communicate to those who are highly dependent on social media will be incapable of carrying on a normal conversation even interacting with people in person.

Social media helps people communicate freely without considering the geographical factor, and social media helps to facilitate people to stay connected with others by just clicking a few buttons and the message will be sent in the shortest period of time [30]. Besides that, social media is to be used as a strategic communication to obtain the internal and external information regarding the organization [1]. This view can be supported at the view that in social media there is a rule of contribution where it encourages contribution and reactions from anyone who are interested in a particular study. The users can exchange information among the users easily by inviting them to participate in the discussion [28].

Social media offers the opportunity for Malaysian to express themselves socially without any control [15]. In [30], Malaysians spend more time on social media to communicate with their online friends rather than spending time with their offline friends and family members. More people are getting their news from online rather than traditional media. However, people are still looking for news and information through online and traditional sources [31]. With this, blogs and other new communication media are changing the way organizations communication with their public such as governments, communities, stockholders, employees, customers, other stakeholders. Besides, social media has quickly become an essential tool for PR practitioners. However, once upon a time, the internet in general was a low priority for practitioners. Although much research is being done in the area, technology is changing as quickly as studies can be conducted and published. Furthermore, the long-term effects of social media still need to be fully explored [32].

"The communications world is dramatically moving in a digital direction and those who know this transformation will communicate much more effectively than those who do not" [33]. PR practitioner must understand this transformation well especially for those who are in the business of communicating with publics in order to communicate efficiently.

"One of the coolest things about the web is that when an idea takes off it can propel a brand or a company to seemingly instant fame and fortune" [34]. Besides, although communicating via the Web that is free, as opposed to purchasing space through traditional advertising, however, only some PR practitioners are using blog and other social media effectively while communicating with their target publics.

Blogs is one of the popular communication tools in social media which is independent from traditional editors and media gate keeping [35]. The use of blogs as a means to collect information is increasing and is able to get better position oneself in the eyes of the public. Previously, PR practitioners would package some worthy news and then send it to the media in hopes of being published. Nowadays, practitioners are not only packaging content for media, they are able to publish the content by themselves through blogs and social networks. Although, practitioners are still inviting and sending information to traditional media, they are now allowed to talk directly with the public, to observe public's responses accordingly. For example, if a consumer tweets a bad comment about a product, the company can respond immediately through tweeter and further provide more services to its consumer.

Most PR professionals believe that the use of social media has had a positive impact on PR. They have also found that about 85 percent of PR professionals believe that these new tools and traditional media are interdependent on each other rather than to compete. A large number of PR practitioners

believe that blogs and social media impact what traditional news media outlets choose to cover. However, the same study found that PR professionals gave traditional media outlets higher scores on ethics, credibility, accuracy and truth [14]. This shows that although the use of social media is recognized by the industry, traditional media are still very important as well, PR practitioners mostly maintain personal blog, and use blogs as a professional communication medium at low levels [8].

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Social Penetration Theory

Social penetration theory was developed by Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor, both being psychology professor in year 1973. This theory is developed to explain the formation of interpersonal relationships that grow deeper and more trusting through the progression of self-disclosure about personal or intimate matters. Both high-risk and low-risk information like personal information, experience, ideas, attitude, feelings and values, past facts, life stories, and even goals can be a part for self-disclosure. Moreover, it also provides reasons of why relationships are formed, why relationships end, and the process that relationships will pass through. Therefore, the principle of social penetration theory has explained that the progression of human relationship will be influenced not only by verbal and non-verbal communication but also the environmental behavioral [36].

This theory can be classified into four categories in building up the intimacy relationship; orientation, exploratory, affective, and stable [37]. Furthermore, some scholars argue that social penetration theory can be clearly observed in computer-mediated communication context nowadays. Individuals who display interest through the computer-mediated communication have high proportions of self-disclosures than those who in face-to-face interactions [38].

Social penetration theory is also being applied in PR context. In the point of view of PR, penetration is the way where the practitioner will practice it in order to build more in depth relationship between the client and target market [39]. The four stages in social penetration theory could be converted into analogous term for PR and be used to better understand the organization-stakeholder relationship and to act as factors affecting the relationship development [40]. Through this theory, good PR campaign will bring closer relationship between the product and public by showing how the product intimate part of the public life [39].

This research will attempt to discover the social penetration of the social media in communication channel that will bring more in-depth relationship among the society where it develops into closeness of relationship without considering the geographical factors. Upon determining that, throughout the research it will allow the researcher to find out the influence of the social media on the PR practice.

B. Media Ecology

Marshall McLuhan is renowned for his theory that modern technology will affect the lives we conduct. The speeds of existing commerce will definitely be increasing towards modern railway. Simultaneously, he believes that the way of people's life would be changing due to media's evolution [41]. The future of communication media will influence our life as many industries currently transform their own communication system to a whole new level such as video conferencing with people in the other parts of the world. McLuhan & Powers also state that new media allow "users become consumers and producers" [42]. Facebook, Pinterest, and YouTube serve as a platform to transform this prediction into reality. Therefore, consumers have more way to share their idea, opinion, and interaction with others. In conclusion, PR practitioners must be able to control the flow of communication in order to engage consumers and employees effectively [43].

During McLuhan's time, has predicted that people can become both producers and consumers of information by using new media. Recent studies found out that social media can deliver information or message much more easily and efficiently than traditional media, therefore PR practitioners have changed the other way of information distribution. Thus, the flows of communication are altered from one way communication to two-way communication to interact with the public.

From this point of view, McLuhan's theory can explain why and how the lives of PR practitioners, consumers, and organizations will be changed by social media and how media's evolution will continue controlling the flow of communication. However, his theory has also shown that this is why PR practitioners, organizations in particular, must learn how to use social media to communicate with strategy audiences effectively.

VI. METHODOLOGY

This study is looking at the influence of social media towards PR practice. It is appropriate to conduct an analytical survey which allows the researcher to examine the interrelationships among the two variables which are social media and PR practice. Thus, an analytical survey is believed to be a fitting choice to reflect and fulfill the objectives and purposes of this research, where the researcher is able to develop explanatory interferences on the research.

The survey is conducted in an online manner. A sample of 100 respondents from PR stream likewise the practitioners will be selected. Basically the researcher will divide the entire targeted population into different subgroups or strata and a sample will be selected from each stratum. In this research, the researcher will divide the entire population with PR background into two subgroups which are professional practitioners and undergraduate students under internships in the relevant companies. The professional practitioners will be selected from a range of PR field practice like large consultancies, small consultancies, corporations, government, and non-government organizations (NGOs) such as

associations. Those respondents are mainly selected based on position titles as well as the years of experience they have at least more than 3 years in the industry that enables to represent the views and practices of the agency or organization. Some interns are also participating in this research due to their experience with social media.

The survey progression has started in January 2014 and ended in February 2014 to complete it. Once the survey progression ends, the researchers will start to tabulate all responses that are collected from the respondents and determine the results for further analysis.

VII. Data Analysis

In this section, the online survey result will be analyzed based on the segments divided in the questionnaires and to be presented in mainly tables and text to enable a comprehensive and concise presentation of findings. Each of the tables will be followed by a brief analysis of each segment to highlight the key message in order to provide better understanding.

The researchers manage to get responses from 86 candidates out of the selected sample of 100. 72% of the respondents participated in the survey are mainly female while the rest of 28% are male. Out of the 72% female respondents, 28% are female PR practitioners while the rest are female PR interns. Furthermore, male respondents for both PR practitioners and PR interns are equally distributed. However, this sampling will not affect the end result as gender is not a key component to be studied in this research.

A. Media Consumption

The result shows that as compared to the traditional media – radio, TV, and newspaper, 87% of respondents from 86 of them prefer online media. Meanwhile, there are only 8% and 5% of the respondents choose print media and broadcast media as the media that they use the most. Among the respondents, 33% of them spend 5 to 6 hours using social media in their daily life. Besides that, 29% spend 3 to 4 hours using social media followed by 17% of respondents who use the social for 1 to 2 hours daily. There are only 1% of respondents that spend less than 1 hour using it. However, the percentage of respondents who spend more than 6 hours on social media in a day in a day, is notable at only 24%.

The result also shows that 50% of the respondents are likely to use social media as a communication channel followed by 21% that are moderately. Meanwhile, respondents who are extremely likely to use social media is only 24%. Compared to the higher percentage, there are only 1% and 3% of the respondents who are not likely and slightly likely in using social media. Thus, it can conclude that social media has formed a vital role nowadays as the public are willing to spend most of their time in using it.

In terms of reasons of using social media, the result has shown that 24% of the respondents are using it as a tool of communication. 20% of the respondents using social media for the networking; 18% using social media for the purpose of looking up the latest news and information; followed by 14% using social media to exchange information with peers,

colleagues, and the public. There are 10% of the respondents use social media for the purpose of conducting research, and only 7% of the respondents use social media for looking up jobs and another 7% is to promote their company, clients or organization.

In the use of social media sites, it shows that Facebook is the social media sites most frequently used by the respondents as it has the highest percentage of 63% compared to other social media sites. Followed by 34% of the respondent are highly visiting Instagram. There are only 13% and 12.8% of the respondents choose Twitter and Google+ as the social media sites that they use most frequently. Compared to the higher percentage, Blogs are the social media sites that are least used by the respondents, it has only 5% of the respondents that are using it. On the other hand, 66.3% of the respondents have ranked Weibo as the social media site that is less frequently used. Overall, the results show that Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram tend to have the highest popularity among the respondents as the channel to communicate with their peers or family members as well as public.

For the statements that can closely describe the pattern of using social media under the segment of media consumption would be that 35% of the respondents agreed that they use social media more often and they are comfortable in using it, followed by 27% of the respondents state that social media has become their regular part of their daily job tasks as well as for their professional development. In addition, there are also 26% of the respondents consider themselves as the 'advanced user' in using social media frequently. On the other hand, only 2% of the respondents have found that even though they have tried to use the social media, they are still not comfortable in using it. There are 6% of the respondents stated that they have tried to use social media and have classified themselves as 'beginner'.

From the results above, it can be concluded that the respondents do not feel awkward in using social media even though social media is still considered a new media channel in the communication industry. Additionally, based on the results obtained, it can show that social media has significantly influenced the professional development and job performance. Social media not only has the tendency to influence the public's life, it has also changed the public's behavior in using it which may turn up into a trend in communication world.

B. Influences and Impacts of Social Media in Communications

The overall results of this segment has shown strong tendency towards agreement, except the context of face-to-face interaction where it has not been reducing, somehow, it stands at a weak disagreement of 52%. On the other hand, social media is perceived at its ability to develop stronger relationships with family members, peers, and colleagues as the connection is at no boundaries, where there are 58% of the respondents find social media performs this way.

At another point of view, the pattern of communication in the society has changed drastically and no longer depending on face-to-face communication. Social media is the first choice whenever it comes to the communication channel which

everyone uses it daily in receiving the latest information and socializes with their peers, family, or colleague. Sad thing is that there is a strong agreement at 82% of the respondents who cannot express their messages through face-to-face but social media plays the role to complete it.

Generally, the respondents like to use social media to communicate as it is timely, where at anytime and anywhere communication can happen. It helps to reduce cost and chats can happen with people of the same interest.

TABLE I
INFLUENCES AND IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN COMMUNICATION

Items	Statements	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
B1.	Social media has become my first choice of communication with my family members, peers and colleagues as it offers me the latest information about them.	10	18	32	40
B2.	I use social media daily to communicate with my family members, peers and colleagues.	3	15	20	62
B3.	I find online communication especially through social media offer me much fun and interactive than face-to-face communication.	2	10	18	70
B4.	I feel that messages that I cannot express through face-to-face can now be conveyed through social media.	3	15	52	30
B5.	With the emergence of social media, I can invite more peers to chat online with the same interest group.	11	19	28	42
B6.	I can access at anytime and anywhere to social media to contact my peers and colleagues.	2	11	35	52
B7.	Social media helps to reduce cost of communication and it offers worldwide communication.	1	6	38	55
B8.	Social media offers me alternative channels to communicate, for examples, forums, blogs and chat rooms, which allow various topics to be discussed.	12	18	42	28
B9.	With the presence of social media, it has reduced face-to-face interactions among family members, peers and colleagues.	17	35	28	20
B10.	Social media has helped to develop stronger relationships with my family members, peers and colleagues as I am able to keep in touch with them without boundaries.	13	29	35	23

TABLE II
INFLUENCES AND IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOWARDS PR PRACTICES

Items	Statements	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
C1.	PR practices now are more visible compared to the previous due to the use of social media in creating more awareness.	3	9	35	53
C2.	I often use social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, etc.) to share and to send out messages about clients' events or campaigns to my followers and friends.	3	10	25	62
C3.	I find social media help to ease media monitoring jobs as PR practitioners now can easily search articles or information about particular clients or organizations easily by entering key words search.	0	8	35	57
C4.	Social media has become an option for practitioners to buzz about PR events, campaigns or messages.	4	22	38	36
C5.	I always visit social media sites to monitor feedbacks from the public about PR campaigns and events.	5	7	36	52
C6.	Practitioners can develop more interactive relationships with the public by using social media, for instance, practitioners can ask questions and get instant feedback from the public.	5	7	36	52
C7.	It is easier to get attention from editors who are not responding through emails but by posting or sharing information in social media sites. That may get them cover the story.	13	15	32	40
C8.	Practitioners may share a link of news release on social media sites to their key public without filtering in the content of the news release.	5	15	44	36
C9.	Practitioners may use social media to remind their key public about particular campaign, event or clients' messages by posting a status, photo or video.	5	15	44	36
C10.	With social media, practitioners are able to assist clients and organizations to get their messages out to wide audience at the least cost compared to traditional media.	4	8	38	50

TABLE III
TREND OF PR

Items	Statements	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
D1.	Social media has enhanced the practice of PR.	6	10	56	28
D2.	Social media offers a lower-cost way of relationship building between organizations and the public.	1	6	38	55
D3.	Social media can replace other media in message delivering to target audience.	8	40	30	22
D4.	Social media is an effective platform in approaching target audience compared to other media	8	30	40	22
D5.	Social media has changed the way your organization communicate with the audience.	6	20	52	22
D6.	Social media is appropriate to become an advertising tool.	6	20	58	16
D7.	Social media allows your organization to respond instantaneously towards criticisms.	2	8	62	28

C. Influences and Impacts of Social Media towards PR Practices

The overall results under this segment have shown a high percentage of agreement in the use of social media for the purposes of PR. It is ranging between 72% to 92% for the total percentage of agreement and strong agreement. Details are reflected in Table II.

Social media has the highest visibility in influencing PR practices, with the high amount of respondents agree that most of the PR activities or campaigns are mostly communicated via social media. PR practitioners agree that social media has helped to ease the media monitoring as well as the research works.

Other agreement would be monitoring feedback and developing interactive relationships with clients and the public. The use of social media is also able to attract attention from editors to share more information. It is also serving as a reminder to the public on the events and activities available. The main part is that through social media practitioners are able to blast out messages easily.

D. Trend of PR

As in overall results in this segment, there is again another tendency of agreement in the trend of using social media for the purposes of PR. The details are reflected in Table III.

Social media has tremendously enhanced the performance of PR in its industry. It has shown a positive tendency towards the use of it. Generally social media offers a low-cost relationship building; it has changed the way an organization, mainly a PR organization, communicate with its target audience; it can be used as an advertising tool which is usually relevant to commercial PR activities; and, the most importantly, social media allows instant responses from an organization with the public.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Throughout this research, we can observe that the respondents are spending more time in their computer-mediated communication which is social media over other media. The researchers manage to determine from the results that self-disclosure happen throughout the usage of social media where most of the respondents have agreed that they spend most of time in using social media in order to increase their relationships with peers, family members, or colleagues by sharing information that they would have shared in face-to-face communication than in social media sites. This result has indicated the self-disclosure as in Social Penetration Theory that can be a part of the process of increasing the relational intimacy.

Based on the results obtained, it has explained that in order to build more in depth relationship with the public in PR practice, the respondents have agreed strongly that social media is the most preferable media to achieve it. As can be observed from the analysis, the respondents show high level of agreement that Facebook is one of the social media sites that they have used often to disclose more information about the PR activities or campaign efficiently. They have also agreed that through sharing information on Facebook, they are able to generate more exposure as well as bringing a closer relationship between the client and target public.

Most PR practitioner commend that social media provides them a path to have direct communication with wide range of public as well as developing more close relationships, as they often use it for sharing information regarding their activities or campaign in order to increase the intimacy level between the public and client. This theory has provided better understanding on how the social media has influenced communication as well as in PR practice nowadays

New media allow users to become consumers and producers. Result shows that social media is an effective platform that allows people to communicate and interact freely as it is not controlled. Besides, users can get detail information instantly due to hyperlinks provided and at the same time people would like to feel inter-connected with others. Simultaneously, consumers have more ways to share their ideas, opinions, and interaction with others. The results have provided an insight synchronized to the idea of Media Ecology Theory. It has been proven by the idea that people now in the era of new media are both producers and consumers of information.

In a nutshell, the social media have had some influences in the communication system now, which indirectly change the PR practices in the industry. The usage of other communication media has experienced a decrease due to the emerging of social media, which provides more interactive and efficient communication channel, resulting in most of the public using it. Somehow social media shall be integrated with other media in order to reach more audience and make communication more effective.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

Thank you for spending time in this online survey which is on the title: Use of Social Media in PR: A Change of Trend. The questionnaire is to discover the potential changes of PR practices in Malaysia with the emergence social media and the use of it among PR practitioners. This questionnaire aims to find out the extensiveness of social media use among the PR practitioners and organizations. It will further help to reflect the influences and impacts of social media among PR users. Your identity and personal information will be kept as confidential.

Instruction: Respondents are to tick ($\sqrt{}$) only an answer until that special request is stated.

TABLE IV
CONSENSUS AND PARTICULARS

□ I agree to take part in this survey.		
DEMOGRAPHY		
1. Gender:	□ Male	□ Female
2. Status of Profession:	□ Practitioner	□ Interns

1) Part A- Media Consumption

This part is structured into Table V with a few questions enquiring on the behavior of media consumption and uses from the respondents.

TABLE V
QUESTIONS ON MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Please tick (√) in the box that BEST describe your answer for the following questions. Only ONE tick is allowed for each question.

A1. Which medium do you currently use the most?
□ Television
□ Radio
□ Newspaper
□ Online

A2. On a daily basis, how much time do you spend in using social media?
□ Less than an hour
□ More than 1 hour; less than 2 hours
□ More than 2 hours; less than 3 hours
□ More than 3 hours; less than 4 hours
□ More than 4 hours; less than 5 hours
□ More than 5 hours; less than 6 hours
□ More than 6 Hours

A3. What are the reasons you use social media?
□ Communication
□ Exchange of information with peers
□ Conducting researches
□ Social networking
□ Seek news and information
□ Job Seeking
□ Promotion of my events / company events / organization events / clients' events

A4. Which of the following social media site that you use most frequently?
(Please rank each of the items using the given scale from less frequent to most frequent: 1 – least frequent: 5 – most frequent)
□ Facebook
□ Blogs
□ Instagram
□ Twitter
□ Weibo
□ Google+

A5. Which statement is closely describing you on the use of social media?
□ I am skeptical of social media therefore I do not use it at all.
□ I have tried social media before but not comfortable in using it.
□ I have tried social media but I would consider myself a beginner.
□ I am using social media more often now and I am comfortable with it.
□ I am using social media very often and I consider myself an advanced user.
□ I am using social media as a regular part of my tasks in my professional development.
□ I consider myself an expert in social media especially for the purposes of my profession.

2) Part B – Influences and Impacts of Social Media in Communications

The statements in Table VI indicate the influences and impacts of social media in communications today. They are reflecting your state of use in social media as a tool to communicate. Please tick (√) only one in the box of agreement levels for each statement. 1 – Strongly Disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 – Agree; and, 4 – Strongly Agree.

TABLE VI
QUESTIONS ON INFLUENCES AND IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN COMMUNICATIONS

Items	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
B1.	Social media has become my first choice of communication with my family members, peers and colleagues as it offers me the latest information about them.	1	2	3	4
B2.	I use social media daily to communicate with my family members, peers and colleagues.	1	2	3	4
B3.	I find online communication especially through social media offers me much fun and interactive than face-to-face communication.	1	2	3	4
B4.	I feel that messages that I cannot express through face-to-face can now be conveyed through social media.	1	2	3	4
B5.	With the emergence of social media, I can invite more peers to chat online with the same interest group.	1	2	3	4
B6.	I can access at anytime and anywhere to social media to contact my peers and colleagues.	1	2	3	4
B7.	Social media helps to reduce cost of communication and it offers worldwide communication.	1	2	3	4
B8.	Social media offers me alternative channels to communicate, for examples, forums, blogs and chat rooms, which allow various topics to be discussed.	1	2	3	4
B9.	With the presence of social media, it has reduced face-to-face interactions among family members, peers and colleagues.	1	2	3	4
B10.	Social media has helped to develop stronger relationships with my family members, peers and colleagues as I am able to keep in touch with them without boundaries.	1	2	3	4

3) Part C – Influences and Impacts of Social Media Towards PR Practices

The statements in Table VII indicate the influences and impacts of social media among PR practitioners today. They are reflecting the practitioners' perceptions and moves in their professional practices with the emergence of social media. Please tick (√) only one in the box of agreement levels for each statement. 1 – Strongly Disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 – Agree; and, 4 – Strongly Agree.

TABLE VII
QUESTIONS ON INFLUENCES AND IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOWARDS PR
PRACTICES

Items	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
C1.	PR practices now are more visible compared to the previous due to the use of social media in creating more awareness.	1	2	3	4
C2.	I often use social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, etc.) to share and to send out messages about clients' events or campaigns to my followers and friends.	1	2	3	4
C3.	I find social media helps to ease media monitoring jobs as PR practitioners now can easily search articles or information about particular clients or organizations easily by entering key words search.	1	2	3	4
C4.	Social media has become an option for practitioners to buzz about PR events, campaigns or messages.	1	2	3	4
C5.	I always visit social media sites to monitor feedbacks from the public about PR campaigns and events.	1	2	3	4
C6.	Practitioners can develop more interactive relationships with the public by using social media, for instance, practitioners can ask questions and get instant feedback from the public.	1	2	3	4
C7.	It is easier to get attention from editors who are not responding through emails but by posting or sharing information in social media sites. That may get them cover the story.	1	2	3	4
C8.	Practitioners may share a link of news release on social media sites to their key public without filtering in the content of the news release.	1	2	3	4
C9.	Practitioners may use social media to remind their key public about particular campaign, event or clients' messages by posting a status, photo or video.	1	2	3	4
C10.	With social media, practitioners are able to assist clients and organizations to get their messages out to wide audience at the least cost compared to traditional media.	1	2	3	4

4) Part D –Trend of PR

The statements in Table VIII indicate the recent trend of PR at the use of social media. They are reflecting the direction of PR industry with the emergence of social media. The impacts and influences of social media are in the search whether they are the factors of PR trend. Please tick (√) only one in the box of agreement levels for each statement. 1 – Strongly Disagree; 2 – Disagree; 3 – Agree; and, 4 – Strongly Agree.

TABLE VIII
QUESTIONS ON TREND OF PR

Items	Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
D1.	Social media has enhanced the practice of PR.	1	2	3	4
D2.	Social media offers a lower-cost way of relationship building between organizations and the public.	1	2	3	4
D3.	Social media can replace other media in message delivering to target audience.	1	2	3	4
D4.	Social media is an effective platform in approaching target audience compared to other media	1	2	3	4
D5.	Social media has changed the way your organization communicate with the audience.	1	2	3	4
D6.	Social media is appropriate to become an advertising tool.	1	2	3	4
D7.	Social media allows your organization to respond instantaneously towards criticisms.	1	2	3	4

- END OF QUESTIONS -

THANK YOU

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Tang Mui Joo (TMJ) is a Senior Lecturer of Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TAR UC) in Malaysia, possesses PhD, Master and Bachelor degrees from University of Malaya (Malaysia), in the area of Media Studies, Publishing and Book Marketing. TMJ is presently Deputy Dean of Faculty of Social Science, Arts and Humanities of TAR UC. Research areas have been diversified, not limited to Publishing and Book Marketing, film analysis, cultural issues, political communication, visual communications, online blogging and politics, PR and CSR, and advertising.

Chan Eang Teng (CET) is a Senior Lecturer of Tunku Abdul Rahman University College in Malaysia, possesses a Master Degree in Strategic and Defense and a Bachelor Degree in the area of International Relations from University of Malaya (Malaysia). CET is currently a teaching and research staff in TAR UC. Research areas have been diversified, not limited to International Relations, online blogging and politics, political communication, PR and CSR, advertising, film analysis, cultural issues and visual communications.