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THE ROLES OF PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTITIONER IN SOCIAL MEDIA DURING COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The Public Relations Practitioner/Officer (PRO) or Corporate Communications (Corp Comm) uses various means of communication to create successful two-way communications between the business and other groups of people. It focuses on bringing the public and a company together in order to display a common understanding or image. PRO professionals use a wide variety of media to establish and maintain positive relations between the hiring agency and its customers by organized marketing promotions and PR events. The objective of this research is to identify the roles of public relations practitioner in social media during COVID-19 in which the challenges faced by PRO in the current COVID-19 pandemic situation, the social media is important in doing PRO task, how they use social media as a part of PRO working routine and are PRO highly dependent to social media for their company through the use of qualitative research, which is an interview to understand and describe the social phenomenon. Lastly, the researchers analysed the data by using thematic analysis. The findings of this research come out that the answer has somehow given from the online interview session in many types of platform such as Google Meet, WhatsApp Video Call and Zoom Meeting which effect on daily life.

Keywords: Public Relations Officer (PRO), Corporate Communications, Social media, COVID-19 and Movement Control Order (MCO).

INTRODUCTION

The roles of public relations practitioner in social media during COVID-19 pandemic was so challenging from day to day. Now, more than ever, in this historic, unprecedented chapter of global crisis, journalists – online, print, and broadcast – are being looked at to hold to account those in government, sports, business, sovereign states, and society, (McLeod, 2020). For information, Public relations is a management mechanism intended to bring individuals together to foster understanding. The Public Relations Practitioner/Officer (PRO) or Corporate Communications (Corp Comm) uses various means of communication to create successful two-way communications between the business and other groups of people. “Public relations professionals enable individuals and organisations to achieve public recognition by explaining the goals, objectives and strategies of their organisation, and by creating and preserving a good profile. Public Relations Practitioners which experts who employ all means of modern communication to achieve an effective two-way flow of information between the organisation and its target groups”, (Global, 2020). “Public relations is a method of communicating in order to produce a positive relationship between a company and the public. It focuses on bringing the public and a company together in order to display a common understanding or image. Mark needs to hire a public relations practitioner, which is an individual who is hired to fulfill this role. They are responsible for developing and maintaining the relationship between a company and the public”, (Whiting, 2003).

Public relations professionals use a wide variety of media to establish and maintain positive relations between the hiring agency and its customers by organized marketing promotions and PR events. They have updates on newspaper articles, magazine articles and news reports so that the public is made aware of the employer's programs and achievements. Their work also includes coordinating and executing public contact projects, which can include setting up speaking engagements, preparing and generating presentations, news releases and lectures, speaking to employers at group meetings, arranging business conventions, reviewing media attention and overseeing fund-raising campaigns. The PRO may prepare stockholders' reports, liaise with clients, managerial and journalistic staff about budgets, timescales and objectives, or work to improve employer / employee relations, and commission or undertake relevant market research, (Whiting, 2003). The role of PRO is to create bridges of understanding, goodwill and awareness between the organization and the public that it needs to affect. There is a temptation for businesses to outsource the task of public relations, while many organisations hire their own specialists. Public relations must not only keep the firm's "public" informed of new products, policy changes and staff changes, but it must keep top management informed of the public's reaction to the company and its products. Because of the strategic role of public relations, it is important to maintain close contact with the upper level of management, (Whiting, 2003).

The public relations practitioner may work in a variety of areas or in one specific field, such as: consulting, community involvement, employee communication, industrial affairs, media liaison and so on. “For examples of a role a public relations practitioner fills is that of a customer liaison. In order to be successful, companies must have public backing. Public relations practitioners must be able to promote a likeable company image and successfully present company objectives to gain the respect and acceptance of the public. Mark's public relations practitioner must create a positive company image so that the public wants to purchase his energy drinks”, (Whiting, 2003). Significant skills include outstanding listening skills, both oral and written, excellent leadership skills, strong IT skills, presentation skills, initiative, ability to prioritize and prepare efficiently, knowledge of multiple media agendas and imagination. This is some personal requirements of PRO which be articulate with fluent verbal and written expression, be friendly and charming, possess leadership qualities, be outgoing and self-confident, be creative, imaginative and persuasive, be multilingual, emotionally stable and mature, be able to deal tactfully with all types of people, have organising and management skills and lastly, be able to work under pressure, (Stead, 2020). In these new days, the water is muddled and the different marketing fields have been interconnected. This is undoubtedly the case for PRO and social media.

In general, PRO was more focused on prominent people such as donors, lenders, corporate partners etc. but with the introduction of social media, these individuals are available on these networks, and can then be used for PRO purposes. As both PRO and social media are used to create and retain faith in the company and its goods, it is only normal that both should be in harmony. “In many ways, it is blatantly obvious the impact social media has had on PR. A few of the key points are PR and social media are based on communication but social media, with its real-time messaging, amplifies your message, allowing PR to be stronger and more impactful. Content published via news releases, emails, and other PR related means can live longer, spread faster and reach further with the help of social media. Then, social media has allowed PR to reach a much larger audience. Previously, PR was targeted at specific individuals such as investors and business partners, but social media has caused this target group to be expanded to include all persons vital to the success of a business. Lastly, social media has made PR more “friendly” to all stakeholders of a business, resulting in a new area of marketing called “relationship marketing”. This helps companies to be more warm, inviting and approachable, regardless of their type or serious nature, (Bates, 2018).

For information, Coronavirus disease case was initially reported on Dec 31 2019, and the WHO China Country Office was informed. The Chinese authorities recognised a new type of coronavirus which was isolated on Jan 7 2020. According to the World Health Organization, (2020), COVID-19 or originally known as coronavirus disease is an transferrable disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people infested with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and convalesce without

requiring special conduct. The virus spreads primarily through droplets or saliva or releases from the nose when an infected individual coughs or sneezes. On Mar 16 2020, Malaysia has declared the Movement Control Order (MCO), effective initial Mar 18 to Mar 31 nationwide to curb the blowout of COVID-19. Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin broadcast the declaration as it was the first time in history that Malaysia has imposed such an order. It is premised on the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988 and the Police Act 1967. The 2020 Movement Control Order (Malay: *Perintah Kawalan Pergerakan Malaysia 2020*), commonly referred to as the MCO or PKP, is a *cordon sanitaire* implemented as a preventive measure by the Federal Government of Malaysia in reply to the COVID-19 pandemic in the country on Mar 18 2020. The order was commonly referred to in local and international media as a "lockdown" or "partial lockdown. The COVID-19 case became serious in Malaysia as day by day. The number of people diseased with this virus is increasing. The Government must find an alternative to lessen the number of people infected. This led to the declaration of Movement Control Order (MCO) which mean, the prohibition of movement and mass assembly nationwide including all religious, sports, social, and cultural activities. To enforce this prohibition, all places of worship and business premises must be closed except for supermarkets, public markets, grocery stores, and stored selling necessities (Tuovila, 2020). The MCO has extended phase by phase as the death case number kept growing. The elders and infants are among the high-risk group that can get this virus. The Government has set up regulations for people to follow and the police responsible for roadblocks implementation. People are not allowed to leave their house without any important reasons, and only the head of the family can buy the essentials. Individuals start to work from home, scholars start their online class, and everything run virtually. People who run a business also start their business online to manage their expenses.

Moreover, due to the nationwide crisis of the coronavirus outbreak, people all over the country including Malaysia have been ordered to sit at home or wherever they are during the MCO (Movement Control Order) which may cause many people use social media along the day. Nevertheless, each social media site can be used in its own specific way to provide PRO support. This is an explanation of the top social media sites and explanations of how they can be used to bring value to the PRO campaign. For examples like Facebook app. If your business or brand is really conversational, this is the way to go. Leverage Facebook features such as parties, mentions, call to action buttons for contributions and commitments, and other Facebook Professional Resources and software to help with PRO events. Besides, Twitter which with its 140-character limit, it's the perfect way to send a short message about a product launch, operation and promotion, or some sort of news. Using hashtags is a perfect way to reach out to users and also to watch what your audience and others are thinking about your business or brand. Twitter has a number of ways to conduct research on your business, brand, competitor and more. In addition, Instagram also the main social media right now. This site is a perfect way to

engage the public. Visuals are good for highlighting deserving causes and raising awareness about critical issues. In addition, Instagram is useful for marketing activities rather it before, after and after to keep the public involved and feel as though they are part of the action, even though they are not.

Social networking ads and PRO can be used by all forms of organisations to foster social impact. Those using tools for corporate social responsibility and social impact projects can do so using any medium in a number of new, interesting and impactful forms, such as Facebook and Twitter Hashtag promotions, are excellent ways that social media and PRO can be used by a company for social impact. It may also be used to increase awareness of the cause or to make donations. It's a smart way to gather your forces and mobilize support for your cause. On the other hand, it also disseminates knowledge. "The best PR professionals listen to clients but ultimately, find ways to address the situations and address problems and help steer through troubled times. While the country is on lockdown, the media - despite facing many of its own problems certainly isn't. And that means being able to deal with communications as calmly, professionally and progressively, is of vital importance", (McLeod, 2020). So, there is no denying that social media is here to stay and can only grow more. PR must therefore develop in such a manner that synergy is preserved and that businesses can optimize the tremendous benefits that can be extracted from these two marketing components especially during COVID-19 pandemics.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Malaysia announced its first Covid-19 cases on Jan 25 involving three China tourists who had entered Malaysia via Johor from Singapore on Jan 23 (Diyana Pfordten and Razak Ahmad, 2020). In March 2020, The Health Ministry has detected five "generations" of positive Covid-19 cases that were linked to the tabligh gathering in the Seri Petaling Mosque last month (Bedi, 2020). Day by day, this case increased until the Government of Malaysia had to implement movement control order (MCO) to contain the coronavirus outbreak. The initial period of the order is taking place starting from Mar 18, 2020, onwards until Mar 31 2020 (Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, 2020). However, the restricted movement order (RMO) keeps being extended by the Government because the cases keep spiking. Malaysian had faced a partial lockdown whereby the public need to follow the order from the Government, which is to stay at home to prevent a major daily spike in coronavirus infections. According to Alliance Bank Malaysia Bhd chief economist, Manokaran Mottain says the novel coronavirus outbreak would impact Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) growth, tourism, airlines, retail as well as the hospitality sector (China's coronavirus, 2020).

This will contribute to the public relations practitioners in Malaysia struggling to do their daily tasks during the Covid-19 pandemic and Movement Control Order (MCO). A total of 6 public relations practitioners were

interviewed. Based on the questions that have been given to each interviewee which is the question is 'challenges during Covid-19 pandemic for public relation'. They have to perform work from home and the matter is quite difficult to adapt. According to Mr. Nazren, before the existence of this Covid-19 pandemic their work was easy to do but when faced with this Covid-19 pandemic it posed a challenge for him in an online platform where he had difficulty communicating with other workers. According to Mr. Akmal, since too much info is spread from various sources, he needs to clarify each of that info whether it is fake or legit. According to Mrs. Aida, this Covid-19 pandemic has restrained her from organizing events as every event to be organized has to be held outdoors and of course she has to postpone it. According to Mr. Rifhan, he needs to manage the crisis of panic buying in supermarkets that spread on social media like in Mydin where the public who visit there do not take care of the System Operation Standard (SOP). According to Kidd Zahar, all the work he does needs to be done face to face such as meetings, discussions, arguments and more. According to Mrs. Syuhaidah, she and her co-workers have to deal with a lack of facilities where their laptops are constantly having problems and internet coverage in their homes is very disappointing. It is very clear that all public relation practitioners are not comfortable doing work from home because working as a public relations practitioner is more like face to face and absolutely challenging them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public relations are a social phenomenon that has existed along with mankind in every society. It starts with the development of societies as a result of the social interaction among individuals' organisations and bodies. Public relations are considered one of the most widespread and expanding professions in the world. In a complex society, globalisation and mutual dependency triumph (Mustajab et. al., 2020). Various organisations whether service or commercial, public or private, political or non – profit or tourism or sporting need employees, practitioners and specialists to communicate the needs of the organisation to the bodies and masses that deal with it, as well as the delivery of demands, needs, and attention of those actors and audiences to the organisation (Amed Kamil, 2020). Moreover, public relations are crucial in every organisation, they build the company brand, spread the organisation's message and reduce the effect of negative publicity.

• Challenges During COVID – 19 Pandemics

The Public Relations professional needs to have a strategic vision of communication (Almansa – Martínez, 2015). At the same time, the challenge for the profession is evaluation. Organizations, at present, have the need to evaluate their communication, not only from a quantitative perspective, but also from a qualitative one. It has always been desirable to measure the results of Public Relations actions, but today it is essential, given the complexity of the supports

in which the messages are distributed to reach the public (Almansa-Martínez, 2015). People often loses focus on work due to the number of disturbances caused by secondary tasks which disturbs the primary tasks, especially towards older employees (Mustajab et. al, 2020). Mustajab et.al (2020) also discussed that working from home during the pandemic has made employee's performance and motivation decreased.

- **Importance of Social Media**

Social media has been increasingly used in public relation. The use of social media is very important for public relation practitioners in three aspects: presentation, communication, and performance (Egwu. A, 2017). Public relations are crucial in every organisation, they build the company brand, spread the organisation's message and reduce the effect of negative publicity. As for small company, the public relations person may have to handle every role in their company such as deflector of criticism, media contact person and a cheerleader, themselves, as they are everyone in every department. Meanwhile public relation practitioners working in large company or firms, they will have more specialised roles to handle different organisational needs, depending on their skills and level of qualification (Capogna et. al., 2018).

- **The Use of Social Media**

The connectivity of social media enables people to develop new relationships between people and organizations and help reconnect with other organizations, companies, and friends (Cheng. J, 2019). The use of social media provides disruption to employee's work productivity as every information received and sent from both managers and co – workers, discussed by Gurken Tekman 2019) and Mustajab et. al (2020). There is also a growing emphasis on social media as an effective vehicle for two – way symmetrical communication between practitioners and publics (Robson P. & Karen E., 2020). However, advancement in the usage of internet – based applications (web/web 2.0 technologies) affects job performance and interaction between practitioners and general public (Rashid M & Sukru A, 2018).

- **Dependency of Social Media**

The emergence of new media particularly social media had further accentuated how organizations build and manage relationships with their strategic publics (Mukhtar K & Arabi. S, 2017). According to Mukhtar K & Arabi. S, 2017), first, people tend to use

or not use an application to the extent they believe it will help them to perform their job better. Second, even if potential users believed that a given application is useful, they may, at the same time, believed that the system is too hard to use and that the performance benefits of the usage are outweighed by the effort of using the application Davis (1989). Schwartzman, Smith, Spetner, & McDonald (2009) studied that public relations is leading the social media revolution inside of organizations of all types and size.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

• Research Design

Research design can be identified as the pattern of research that is holds all the elements in a research project, Md Inaam Akhtar (2016). It is also a plan of the proposed research work. Research design does not involve with any number and representation, but it is more of textual and narrative information. For example, experience, ideas, opinion and emotion of people that are often take place in this kind of research. Based on this research, the researcher has used qualitative in-depth interview research. The purpose of this research is to identify the roles of public relations practitioner in social media during COVID-19 that has affect them due to the current issue of pandemic situation. The respondent can answer the question with their own words and opinion freely. There are six respondent that have participated in this type of research.

• Data Collection Strategy

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on various types of interest, Kabir (2016). In this research paper, the researcher conducted an interview with the respondent. Public Relations practitioner will be setting up to an interview session with the researchers. There will be six respondents that will be interview with by the researcher to gain better information about the roles of public relations practitioner in social media during the pandemic of COVID-19. For this research, the interview session will take around 45 minutes. The question is based on their experiences, opinion, thought, and perception as public relations. The interview session will be held on digital platform such as, Google Meet and Zoom Meeting due to the pandemic of COVID-19.

• Sampling

Sampling is a process that has been used in a research which is an observation taken from a group of population, Tuovila (2020). This method is used as a sample from the populations and it depends on the type of research. Sampling is the process of choosing participants from the group. Choosing some of the respondent to get a majority result is very necessary. Moreover, the size of the sample also very crucial in order to make sure that it is suitable for the

respondent in this qualitative research. The non-probability sampling has been chosen for this research. Non-probability has involved non-random selection based on other criteria. It helps to easily collect initial data. The researcher chose the public relations practitioner as the respondent to gather their personal experience of being a public relations practitioner in social media during pandemic COVID-19. Since they are also being part of the people that has affected because of the pandemic. Through their experienced, they can share their opinion and thought about what they have been through.

Stated below are the list of public relations practitioner interviewed by the researchers:

- i. Mr. Akmal Adanan – 38 years old (Work with UiTM Melaka for nine years)
- ii. Mr. Nazren – 33 years old (Work with PLUS Malaysia Bhd for eight years)
- iii. Mr. Ahmad Nurulhakim – 32 years old (Work with Television Networks Sdn Bhd for six years)
- iv. Ms. Aida Fakhrul – 29 years old (Work with Global Turbine Asia Sdn Bhd for four years)
- v. Ms. Rifhan Kamaludin – 40 years old (Work with Suruhanjaya Tenaga Malaysia for eight years)
- vi. Mrs. Wan Syuhaida Zain – 34 years old (Work with EPIC Berhad Terengganu Malaysia for two years)

● Data Analysis

In this research, the researchers have interviewed all six respondents. Thematic analysis has been chosen for this research paper. Thematic analysis is a method to identify, organising and offering insight into across a dataset, Clarke (2012). This method helps the researcher to identify the collective or shared meanings or experiences from the respondents. It also a way of identifying a topic that has been written or talked about. The purpose of this method is to allows the researcher to get the important information into the topic and explore the question with the respondent. It is also to identify those relevant answers for the questions given. Thematic analysis is the flexible method that can be used in a research because it helps the researcher to focus on the important data in different ways and respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

RQ1: What are the challenges faced by Public Relations (PR) practitioners during COVID-19 pandemic?

1. Online platform challenge

Based on Ms Aida Fakhrul, one of the Public Relations practitioner in Global Turbin Asia Sdn. Bhd., online platform has been the challenge that she needs to face during this pandemic. As physical meeting and events

are not suggested during Movement Control Order (MCO), virtual meeting and events are widely held among companies. However, it leads to few constraints. During MCO, she handled the first time virtual 'KL Business Conference' event. She admitted that virtual events are different from physical one and virtual meeting also brings a lot of problem such as dragging time because of Internet connection and so on.

"In one of the meeting, we waited for the clients to join the meeting too long until the end of the time slot," she said.

Based on Mr. Ahmad Nurulhakim, a PR practitioner for Media Prima also face the same online platform challenge during the pandemic. However, he said that it is fun even though it is challenging.

For Mr. Nazren, a PR practitioner for PLUS Malaysia Bhd., working with online platform is something new as he never done things like virtual meetings but now he is used to it. As stated in The 10 Most Common Video Conferencing Problems Explained (n.d.), unfamiliar tools can be daunting the first time someone uses them (para. 30). Besides, it is hard to communicate with the team virtually rather than face to face.

As for Mrs. Wan Syuhaida, a Public Relations practitioner in EPIC Berhad Terengganu Malaysia, online platform is a challenge for her because it is time consuming especially in decision making. In physical meeting, decision can be made by the end of the meeting but virtual meeting does not as they have to wait for everyone's answer. Moreover, online platform has become a challenge as not all employees have complete facility. Poor Internet coverage has become a major problem when working with online platform besides broken laptops and other devices.

2. Different working style

Based on Public Relations practitioner, Ms Aida, different working style has become a challenge for her as nature of the job is working outdoor and meet a lot of people. The table turns when MCO is implemented, practitioners have to work from home and face-to-face meetings cannot be held. She also organised less events than usual physical events such as contest or competition during the pandemic.

Mr. Nazren, a PR practitioner for PLUS Malaysia Bhd. is on the same page with Ms Aida as different working style is a challenge for him. Work from home takes longer working hours than usual office hours and sometimes, he has to work on weekends and public holidays. As stated by Davis & Green (2020), people are overworked, stressed, and eager to get back to the office (para. 1).

3. Miscommunication

Ms Aida Fakhrol, one of the Public Relations practitioner in Global

Turbin Asia Sdn. Bhd. mentioned that miscommunication has become a critical challenge for her during the pandemic because of lesser effectiveness in online communication rather than face-to-face communication.

Ms. Rifhan, Assistant Director of Corporate Communication & Strategic Planning at Suruhanjaya Tenaga Malaysia, also said that miscommunication is a challenge for her because fake news and rumours related to COVID-19 are widely spread in everywhere. It is a challenge when the rumours and fake news affected her employer's image.

4. Crisis management

Mr. Akmal Adanan, who works in Corporate Communication Department at University of Technology MARA (UiTM) Alor Gajah Branch, said that crisis management has become the challenge for him during the pandemic. He has to figure out on how to put assertive elements in every press release or official statements but do not make anyone panic at the same time. He has to clarify alot of information too because there are so many information from different sources. Besides, he has to wait for official statements and circular letter from main campus (Shah Alam), Ministry of Higher Education and National Safety Council during the pandemic before releasing the campus circular letter. It is stressful as students and lecturers need the information as soon as possible.

Ms Rifhan, Assistant Director of Corporate Communication & Strategic Planning at Suruhanjaya Tenaga Malaysia, also a former Corporate Communication Senior Executive & Crisis Management, has to face the challenge in crisis management as people are panic buying few days before Movement Control Order (MCO) is implemented. As stated in Covid-19: Panic buying at supermarkets nationwide (2020), unusually big crowds and long queues were seen in supermarkets following sharp increases in the number of Covid-19 cases in the country (para. 1).

Conclusion Remarks

In conclusion, online platform has become one of the most common challenge faced by PR practitioner during COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, people has no choice but study the features in online platforms, try their best to get the best Internet connection and invest on the best devices to make their work-from-home routine easier than usual.

RQ2: Why social media is important in doing your task as Public Relations (PR) practitioner?

1. To promote company

According to Ms Aida Fakhrul, social media is important as it is the best platform to promote her company, Global Turbin Asia Sdn. Bhd.

"Where else can we promote?" she said.

This is because social media can reach more audience and this is

good for introducing her company to people. The finding is supported with Why Social Media Is Important for Business Marketing (2018), that mentioned that with more than three billion people around the world using social media every month, the users and engagement on major platforms just keep increasing (para. 4).

Based on Ms Rifhan, Assistant Director of Corporate Communication & Strategic Planning at Suruhanjaya Tenaga Malaysia also uses social media to promote her company. She uses company social media to share about company events and updates about the company.

Not only that, Mrs Wan Syuhaida, a Public Relations practitioner in EPIC Berhad Terengganu Malaysia, also uses social media to promote her company. She said that social media such as Facebook offers free advertising which is good for the company. It helps a lot to raise the company name.

2. To share informations

As Ms Aida Fakhrul is a Public Relations practitioner for an aviation company, Global Turbin Asia Sdn. Bhd., she feels that social media is important to share information about aviation industry. This attracts aviation enthusiasts and promote engagement between her company and people out there.

Mr. Akmal Adanan, who works in Corporate Communication Department at University of Technology MARA (UiTM) Alor Gajah Branch also sees social media as important thing because he uses social media to share information.

“Most people are glued to their smartphones,” he said.

Therefore, he can reach almost all student and lecturers to share his information by using social media. As stated by Dunne (2020), The RescueTime study says that people pick up their phones an average of 58 times a day, with 30 of those pickups during working hours (para. 8). Besides, information can be spread easier and faster through social media.

Ms Rifhan, Assistant Director of Corporate Communication & Strategic Planning at Suruhanjaya Tenaga Malaysia also agreed that social media is important to share information for the same reason with Mr. Akmal, which is easier and faster spreading.

Besides, Mr. Nazren who is the PR practitioner in PLUS Malaysia Bhd, finds that social media is important to give updates for users about current situation that related his company on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube in order to help the company and people acknowledged. He personally thinks that it is important for him to share the information needed and claimed that social media is very important, but it depends on what situation it is.

Mr. Ahmad Nurulhakim, a PR practitioner for Media Prima agrees that social media is important to share information because of the power

of viral. He finds that every social media has its own focus point. Facebook; lifestyle, Instagram; how people look, LinkedIn; for work, YouTube; personal life.

“The engagement with people is important for every Public Relations practitioner,” he said.

3. To help others

According to Ms Aida Fakhurul, social media is important for PR practitioners like her to help others. She helps Human Resources (HR) department in her company by promoting job vacancies in the company. This is important because a lot of people are unemployed and lost their jobs during the pandemic. She indirectly helps them too. This finding is supported by Malaysia's unemployment rate at 4.7pc in Oct 2020, data shows. (2020), the country registered the highest number of those who were temporarily not working with a total of 5.9 million persons during MCO in April 2020 (para. 9).

Moreover, Ms. Rifhan, Assistant Director of Corporate Communication & Strategic Planning at Suruhanjaya Tenaga Malaysia also sees social media as important thing for her in doing her task because she can help others who is looking for job vacancies.

Besides, Mrs. Wan Syuhaida, a Public Relations practitioner in EPIC Berhad Terengganu Malaysia feels that social media as important thing for her in doing her task as PR practitioner because she can help her company to quickly respond to reports from people in-need or assistance. Complaints or charity activities can start from social media as the engagement between company and people out there is wide.

Conclusion Remarks

In conclusion, social media is important in doing task as Public Relations (PR) practitioner because they can share information to a lot of people in easier and faster way. This modern days require compact, fast and accurate information all the time. Therefore, PR practitioners see the importance of social media in doing their tasks.

RQ3: How do you use social media as a part of your working routine?

1. Personal content

Ms Aida Fakhurul, one of the Public Relations (PR) practitioner in Global Turbin Asia Sdn. Bhd. said that she uses social media for personal content as a part of her working routine. As a PR practitioner, she has to make engagement between herself and people out there. This is supported by Bates (n.d.), that said in social media, content is published in an effort to elicit a response, which is welcomed by the company to foster and maintain engagement. She uses social media to share her expertise skills

as a PR practitioner so that people who are looking to hire her in future can know about it. Also, she can get feedback from people about her personal sharing.

Mr. Akmal Adanan, who works in Corporate Communication Department at University of Technology MARA (UiTM) Alor Gajah Branch also uses social media by sharing personal content as a part of his working routine. He shares about his personal life like children activities, jogging and more as long as it attracts people attention to know about his life updates for public engagement.

Besides, Ms. Rifhan, Assistant Director of Corporate Communication & Strategic Planning at Suruhanjaya Tenaga Malaysia uses social media as a part of her working routine to expose herself. She shares about advantages she has, event she handled and voluntary works she made. This is to make sure that it is easy for her to get job offer letter in future.

2. Disseminate company related information to people

Ms Aida Fakhrul, one of the Public Relations (PR) practitioner in Global Turbin Asia Sdn. Bhd. uses social media as a part of her working routine by disseminate company related information to people. She uses her personal social media like Facebook to inform about company public events and uses company social media to inform company internal events.

According to Ms. Rifhan, Assistant Director of Corporate Communication & Strategic Planning at Suruhanjaya Tenaga Malaysia, she uses social media by disseminating company related information like company organization, function and more. She also exposes the stakeholder and shareholder in social media. As stated by Bates (n.d.), social media has made PR more “friendly” to all stakeholders of a business, resulting in a new area of marketing called “relationship marketing”. This helps companies to be more warm, inviting and approachable, regardless of their type or serious nature (para. 3).

Based on Mr. Nazren, PR practitioner in PLUS Malaysia Bhd, he stated that even though social media is very crucial nowadays but he personally does

not really use social media for his working routine. He might use them for disseminate important information but only through Whatsapp platform in order to share any information with his friends or family.

According to Mr. Ahmad Nurulhakim, a PR practitioner for Media Prima, also disseminate information to people as a part of his working routine. In Twitter, he mostly posts his insights, opinions, announcements of his company programmes and more. Through Facebook, he shares his lifestyle that targeting on older generation audience. In LinkedIn and Microsoft Team, he disseminates information that related to his work with Media Prima.

Lastly, Mrs. Wan Syuhaida, a Public Relations practitioner in EPIC Berhad Terengganu Malaysia also uses social media as a part of her working routine by disseminate company related information to people in every social media especially when her company is holding an event. Besides, she also disseminates information related to COVID-19 cases on social media as it is a part of public interest in current days.

3. Media monitoring

According to Mr. Akmal Adanan, who works in Corporate Communication Department at University of Technology MARA (UiTM) Alor Gajah Branch, he uses social media to monitor all information from different sources that related or involving his employer. He then sorts all the information before further actions. Media monitoring on current issues and in-trend activities also done by him as he can use it for conversation starter. For example, he reads information about Norwex cloth, in-trend stuff so he can use it as conversation starter with clients. Media monitoring is important. As stated in What is media monitoring and why is it important? (n.d.), media monitoring enables you to stay on top of threats to your brand's reputation. It can help you to develop your reputation further by keeping you on top of what's being said about your brand and who's saying it (para. 23).

According to Ms. Rifhan, Assistant Director of Corporate Communication & Strategic Planning at Suruhanjaya Tenaga Malaysia, she uses social media to monitor the medias that post about her company's events. She later will repost about it in company's social media.

Conclusion Remarks

Social media has become a crucial source for Public Relations (PR) practitioners in carrying out their duties. This is because they have to work close with people for their companies. The only way to do it fast and easy is through social media. Therefore, PR practitioners uses social media for many reasons and many ways as a part of their working routine.

RQ4: Do you think Public Relations (PR) practitioners are highly dependent to social media for their company?**1. Yes**

According to Mr. Akmal Adanan, who works in Corporate Communication Department at University of Technology MARA (UiTM) Alor Gajah Branch, Public Relations (PR) practitioners are definitely highly dependent to social media. For him as a PR practitioner, publicity for his employer is really important although he is not looking for profits, only seeks for good image of UiTM, his employer. This is because his company is contributing to society a lot in terms of education.

Ms. Rifhan, Assistant Director of Corporate Communication & Strategic Planning at Suruhanjaya Tenaga Malaysia, Public Relations (PR) practitioners are definitely highly dependent to social media for their company. She said social media is wide, fast and easy to access, making it an ideal perform for PR practitioner to do their jobs. It is capable to boost public awareness about the company and allows two-way communication as people can give comments and reactions.

According to Mr. Nazren, PR practitioner in PLUS Malaysia Bhd., he agrees that Public Relations (PR) practitioners are highly dependent to social media for their company. It is because through social media, like him as a PR practitioner, he can always share the important information and press release for the public to aware about the current issue especially about COVID-19. Through awareness and tell the audience about the issue, it will help the people know what has happened around them. He also added that with the existing of social media, it is very crucial for every company to use them.

According to Mrs. Wan Syuhaida, a Public Relations practitioner in EPIC Berhad Terengganu Malaysia, she agrees that Public Relations (PR) practitioners are highly dependent to social media for their company. Mrs. Syuhaida relies heavily on social media because there are many positive impacts to raise the image of her company. If her company gets negative feedback, she knows how to handle it immediately in social media. Mrs. Syuhaida has charity plans to distribute to people in need especially the company's employees.

2. Not Necessarily

According to Ms Aida Fakhrol, a Public Relations (PR) practitioner in Global Turbin Asia Sdn. Bhd., Public Relations (PR) practitioners are not completely dependent to social media for their company. Social media has a lot of problem comes with it. To promote company in social media, a legit system must be done to avoid mistakes happen. If social media is misused, she said,

"It would be a big problem to our company. Balance is vital. PR practitioner cannot too dependent to social media all the time."

Based on Mr. Ahmad Nurulhakim, Public Relations (PR) practitioner of Media Prima, Public Relations (PR) practitioners are not

completely dependent to social media for their company because traditional media is enough for engagement and exposure.

“We have TV, newspapers and more. Use it,” he said.

He added, social media has a lot of consequences such as netizen reactions and negativity that can harm his company’s image and reputation.

Conclusion Remarks

Social media might be widely used by Public Relations (PR) practitioners in doing their job. But balance is needed in order to make sure it does not bring any harm to the brand, company or employer as creating cohesive brand image can be difficult in social media. This finding is supported with The Negative Effects of Social Media on Business (2019), a poorly executed branding campaign can destroy your reputation in a matter of minutes (para. 5).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, social media is a potential way for companies to keep an eye on the pulse of public opinion, broaden the brand's customer base, hear about their desires, and then use that knowledge for better engagement. For Public Relations (PR) professionals, however, social media extend beyond traditional media relations and offer the potential to share information, engage the public, and build relationships with the public (Kent & Taylor, 2014). Social media also can be used to help PR practitioners increase the market profile of their employers. By blogging and online mentions, it help them spread the news about their company. More media exposure, more potential customers. To ensure that the social media page is rated by search rankings, make sure the content is attractive and fulfil people wants and needs. Their company is more likely to thrive and draw repeat clients if it is well-known and well-liked by its customers and stakeholders. The most competitive businesses can adapt instantly to what people say about their company. So that they can dispel negative 'word of mouth' and draw more consumers. It is clear that one of the advantage of social media is to keep the business at the leading, to ensure that it is up-to-date and in contact with future clients. This research showed how social media provides excellent ways for public relations experts to communicate with the public. Besides, social media is a medium to help monitoring the engagement between companies and people. The new Public Relations tools have meant that a variety of new strategic communication tactics and channels have emerged giving public relations professionals new ways to reach stakeholders, the public, and the media (Kent & Taylor, 2014). Social media provide a clear connection to customers in advertisement and marketing. However, some of the negatives social media effects have also been identified, such as social networking, which

can theoretically isolate individuals and views from broader contexts. Therefore, as Public Relations Officers, all of them need be always to keep learning, explore a lot, and always keep update and in touch on what the latest social media changes, from time to time.

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